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*University of Pittsburgh*

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*To W. Harry Jellema, Professor of Philosophy, Calvin College, formerly Chairman, Department of Philosophy, Indiana University, R. Bruce Raup, Professor Emeritus of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, and Harold C. Mason, my father, Professor of Christian Education, Asbury Theological Seminary, who taught that rigorous criticism, intense commitment, and humane consideration are not incompatible.*

# Preface\_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATIONAL THEORY and philosophy of education are fields of investigation intimately related to history and sociology. Schools are social institutions supported by specific cultures in specific times and places. Thus, theories about the work of schools, if meaningful and relevant, are actually proposals for educational policy. Educational policy is an expression of the traditions, social controls, aspirations, and ideals of a people. This book constitutes an analysis and exposition of the philosophy and history of education in the United States and, thus, of the social bases of contemporary education in American culture. These social foundations are to be located both in the traditions of a people and in their guiding ideals for the future, stated explicitly or embodied in proposals for social action.

The book is addressed to contemporary arguments pertaining to educational policy in the United States. The procedure is, first of all, to place these arguments against the background of educational traditions in this country and philosophical contexts in which positions are to be located. In the second place, the historical development and philosophical grounding of recent public education in the United States are described. A third step is to present an analysis of a range of currently voiced criticisms of public school policy. Finally, an assessment of alternatives in this policy is provided.

Care has been taken to provide documentation for the argument. One purpose has been to support interpretations advanced. An equally important purpose has been to present directions for further study in the light of which various interpretations and proposals may be modified, reconstructed, or rejected wholesale. Invitations to further investigation and re-examination are also provided in the Notes appended to each chapter; an asterisk (\*) marks passages in the text commented upon in these Notes.

# Acknowledgments\_\_\_\_\_

THE INTELLECTUAL indebtedness of the writer is best indicated by the complete bibliography of works to which some reference is made. However, such a list never explains the special quality of the essay to which it is appended. In addition to those mentioned in the dedicatory note, the influence of John Childs and Henry Veatch, in years past, may be noted. They cannot, however, be held responsible in any way for this particular book. A rhetorician not untouched by *philosophia*, Ted Riley, Assistant Editor for Allyn and Bacon, has served as the best critic in this venture. The following works quoted directly have been particularly important in the interpretation of the current educational controversy in its social and historical context:



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In connection with analysis and exposition of various philosophies of education, certain basic works are quoted directly. Acknowledgment of permissions to quote from writings listed below, secured from publishers and distributors indicated, is appropriate: Adler, Mortimer, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1940).

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Readers familiar with this author's *Moral Values and Secular Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), which has been out of print for several years, will be aware of ways in which the present work has grown out of and builds upon the earlier book. This is especially evident in Chapters II, III, V, XI, XII, and XIII.

A wife and daughter who unfailingly provide a welcome home after one's innumerable absences, the students from whom the instructor learns more than they from him, and those good friends among professional colleagues whose criticism and counsel mean encouragement and support—these people make it good to work, and they deserve credit if any of the work is good.

R.E.M.

University of Pittsburgh  
July 10, 1959

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# Introduction



## CHAPTER ONE

# Values, Educational Theory, and the Public Schools

STUDY OF HISTORY and theory of American education becomes especially significant in the context of the great debate over the schools, in which American citizens are currently engaged. Positions need to be grounded in knowledge of American traditions and in critical awareness of theoretical alternatives. The public school controversy is more than a struggle among vested interests and power groups, although certainly organized power is involved. The controversy derives its fundamental dynamic and receives its public response and participation because of the philosophical issues involved. Arguments about the public schools are also arguments about the universe of contemporary man and his place in it. In part, people are disagreeing about education because they are not clear about these matters. The controversy may not be resolved when its elements are properly understood in historical and theoretical context, but it will be clarified, for the concealed cultural and philosophical roots of positions will thereby be opened for public inspection.

A society hangs together to the extent that there is common agreement as to which things are important. That the public

schools remain open and that the people do not refuse to pay taxes for their support are indications that our society has a degree of strength and stability. These are indications that there are certain common loyalties and understandings which hold us together. We maintain public schools to teach the young the ways agreed upon as important to our society. At the same time, we do not believe in coerced common agreement. We pin our faith on open argument and discussion as the method for determining policy. An important characteristic of a free, open society such as ours is that argument, discussion, or disagreement about the ways which are to be approved is tolerated. Those who are enthusiastic about democracy say that this is a good thing—that a society is healthy when people keep arguing and discussing. At the same time, they grant the inescapable necessity of majority agreement on common values which are to be preserved. Thus when, in an open society, values cherished by one generation are not brought into flower as a new generation emerges from the schools, these institutions upon which a special responsibility for the nurture of the young has been placed are criticized. Believers in democracy feel that values may be refined through such a process of free, open debate. Nevertheless, there is always the possibility that majority agreement may not issue, and this is the calculated risk that every free society must take.

Dictators, unwilling to take the calculated risk, disapprove of such argument. Dictators maintain that the important things must be sorted out and stated by the leader, and that others are not to question his judgment. Effective dictators have characteristically watched schools very closely to make sure that only officially approved ways are taught. Teachers in a totalitarian society, whether a primitive one governed by taboo or a modern one like the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, can devote attention to the refinement of methods of teaching. However, since the content of education is clearly and precisely defined by the ways of the tribe or the "party line," it is not appropriate for teachers

to concern themselves with fundamental educational aims. Thus, a dictatorship achieves social integration by enforcing and reinforcing common values through programs of deliberate education. On the other hand, the American tradition is that no dictator shall state precisely for all the people and for the public schools what shall be taught. The people work this out among themselves.

Inasmuch as education is a value-charged activity, confusion and disagreement in the culture as to what is valuable involves confusion and disagreement about what should be taught in schools. Moreover, the moral standards that are used in making judgments about the society and about the schools arise out of and continue to exist in the culture.<sup>1</sup> These criteria of judgment are carried over into programs for social and educational action. Arguments reflect conflicts among moral and educational standards, and arguments carry over into efforts to establish practices viewed as wise and good by one party, and as unwise and evil by another. Intelligent criticism of these conflicting standards is to some degree possible. It is possible to understand, to evaluate, and even to reconstruct judgmental standards, but this can only be done as guiding beliefs are first raised to the level of critical self-consciousness. What is needed is a sober, searching effort by all men of good will to locate moral standards appropriate to a free society. What is needed is a firm effort to identify and state values to be taken as guiding principles, standards, and ends.

While it is proper and desirable that all citizens participate in such an enterprise, teachers should take leadership in stimulating and guiding discussion. They can do this as they engage responsibly in cultural and philosophical criticism, take positions accordingly, and participate, thus armed, in public debate. One task facing American teachers today is that of community leader-

<sup>1</sup> See Horace S. Fries, "Varieties of Freedom: an Effort toward Orchestration," in *Freedom and Experience*, ed. Sidney Hook and Milton R. Konvitz (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1947), pp. 11-12.

ship in the enterprise of formulating clear conceptions of educational values. This responsibility has grown more pressing as the school-leaving age has risen. As youngsters move out of the elementary grades into high school and college, points of view, beliefs, meanings, doctrines, and interpretations have greater part in the school work. Students and teachers become increasingly aware that warring, conflicting points of view are represented by various authorities and various social groups.\*

Thus, teachers cannot possibly remain neutral in the educational controversies. They have the inescapable professional obligation to take leadership in working toward clarification as to which things are worth teaching in American schools. It may be said that public schools are non-political and non-religious; it may be claimed that teachers are impartial and fair; and some may even demand that controversial issues be excluded from classrooms. Such efforts to remove the schools from the arena of controversy are unproductive. To point out what the school is not to do, or what is to be avoided in the classroom, fails to set any positive guide as to what is to be done. Merely to say that education should be "for democracy" or "for democratic citizenship" has meaning only as democratic values are stated, defined, and explained positively.

It is unfortunate that so much of the current argument in the public school controversy moves at the level of sensational, journalistic charge and counter-charge. Teachers as free citizens with a special interest and competence in education can lead in helping people to argue competently and effectively, promoting modes of controversy which contribute to the clarification of issues and, through understanding of basic differences, suggesting ways of productive compromise at the level of policy. This book is intended primarily for teachers. However, inasmuch as the issues discussed are issues of public policy, it is also relevant as a public document.

## THE FUNCTION OF THIS BOOK

The basic premise of this work is that choices must be made regarding educational policy, and that these choices are grounded in historical circumstances and philosophical alternatives. At the outset it will be argued that decisions about education are value decisions. Having established the proposition that educational policy requires choice, a survey of the history of educational thought in the United States with regard to criteria of educational choice is provided in Chapters II and III. On the basis of the historical survey, Chapter IV presents the philosophical context within which educational choices are made, and discusses the role which philosophy can play in providing a basis for decisions regarding educational policy.

Chapters V, VI, and VII are devoted to the historical development and theoretical dimensions of the so-called New Education. The focus here is upon theory and practice of public education in the United States since 1900. Chapters VIII, IX, X, and XI survey criticisms of the theory and practice of public education of the mid-twentieth century, made by humanistic scholars, the so-called New Conservatives, and religious leaders. It is maintained that the crux of the public school controversy is the conflict between various "scientific" theories of education on the one hand (these expressed in twentieth-century public school theory and practice), and various "literary humanistic" theories of education on the other. Inasmuch as the critique of public education developed by literary humanists, conservatives, and religious leaders is grounded in philosophical notions that antedate the rise of the twentieth century science-of-education movement, the controversy is interpreted as one between modernists and traditionalists. Chapters XII, XIII, XIV, XV, and XVI provide an assessment of the major issues in the controversy with a view to the preservation of the values of public education in a pluralistic, open society.

It is not the primary purpose of the book to propose a philosophy of education, but rather, to locate, describe, analyze, and criticize the positions taken by partisans in the current educational controversy. It is not by default that a philosophy of education is not proposed, for the main thrust of the book is that educational policy should be an expression of a society and, thus, must be viewed as an aspect of the cultural history of a people.

## MEANINGS OF EDUCATION

Education is formal and informal, deliberate and non-deliberate. Much of what we learn, we learn from sources that we locate with difficulty. Many things that we know, we have somehow "absorbed," or "picked up," or "grown up with." A distinction is to be drawn between education as that total complex of influences which form the person, and deliberate or institutionalized education, which selects certain things for special emphasis in an institution known as the school. In some societies, notably that of the United States in the twentieth century, formal or deliberate education is to a very considerable degree sponsored by the state. Thus *education*, as talked about and studied in the United States, tends to denote public school education.

### *Education as enculturation*

Anthropologists and sociologists have sometimes used the term *enculturation* to designate those learnings which people get from society at large—from the experiences of growing up in homes, in communities, in historical epochs, and in social milieus. In a way, a person's education is everything that happens to him, for after all, everything that happens to us changes us, influences us in one way or another. This deeper meaning is suggested in the classic autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams*. Plato attached such broad meaning to education that a totalitarian state with philosopher-king dictators in control was advocated as

an educational measure. Moreover, John Dewey spoke of education as growth.

In most if not all societies, customs, folkways, and mores which guide the process of informal or non-deliberate education evolve through accidental and often irrational social processes. Folkway standards are not always held consciously, although in times of cultural crisis there may be a stronger tendency for people to examine and assess their assumptions than in times of peace. But the assumptions in which the social rules are grounded are frequently below the surface, embedded in the preferred ways of life to which people have become accustomed through generations. They are the rules by which the game of life has been regulated, and they include the scoring scheme which determines winning or losing. These ways of reacting to the world and these interpretations of its deeper meanings are not constructed deliberately at a given time and place. They grow up out of patterns of living. They are harmonized and fitted to events through gradual modification.

### *Formal or deliberate education*

Formal or deliberate education means those things we learn as people around us work upon us, with intent, to see to it that we learn them. Upon occasion, we purposely set ourselves to some learning task. We take bridge lessons, or we buy a pair of skis and work deliberately at the task of learning to use them. Formal or deliberate education is education aware of itself—aware of what it is about. Schools represent highly organized efforts at deliberate, formal education. In the United States, the police power of the state is called upon to enforce school attendance. Some effort is made in public schools to secure the assent of the subjects to the ordeal, but whether they like it or not, we enforce school attendance; we impose school upon them. That this is done is a clear indication that the people, having organized themselves as the state, intend to see to it that the young learn certain

things. We force the young to attend school so that we may teach them things we have determined they should know. Deliberate or formal education, perhaps more than any other human-social activity, is a conscious embodiment in practice of values deeply cherished. For education is the practice by which men nurture their young in those ways of living that men consider good.

### *Public school education*

No responsible treatise on education in the United States can ignore special connotations of the term which have arisen because public education has come to occupy a unique place in our society. American universities engage in the preparation of teachers and administrators for the public tax-supported schools in the United States. Through state departments of education, specific rules and regulations governing the preparation of teachers for the public schools have been enacted and are enforced. Through its own colleges and universities, the state itself actively engages in the preparation of teachers. It also allows independent colleges and universities to prepare teachers for its public schools, but these independent institutions must meet the standards drawn and enforced by the state. For many years, most of the states have ruled that a certified teacher—that is, a teacher licensed by the state to teach in the public, tax-supported schools of the state—must have engaged in formal study of education. The colleges and universities, on the other hand, have not ordinarily taken the position that education is to be studied as a part of the program of general education of all college students. Thus, for a good many years in every college and university in the country, students enrolled in education courses have, in large majority, been people preparing to teach in public schools. Moreover, the professors hired to teach these courses have been, quite properly under the circumstances, people with interest in and knowledge about the schools. Thus *education* has come to denote public school education.



Education, then, can mean enculturation—the total complexity of social influences playing upon a human being to make him what he is. Education may also mean formal, deliberate education; that is, the school. Finally, in the United States we frequently use the term with the public tax-supported schools in mind.

Now, while education in the broadest sense—that is, education as enculturation—goes on unconsciously whether or not we pay any particular attention to it, deliberate education is always a product of planning. That is, decisions or choices are made somehow by someone as to what pupils are to be taught.

## THE ROLE OF VALUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Everybody is for some things and against others. A preferred way of doing things in one society is frowned upon or severely punished in another. With all of the individual liberty that is provided American citizens, it cannot be denied that strongly enforced rules of propriety exist in our society. Preferences and weightings are part of the warp and woof of social living. Such systems of preferences and avoidances which largely make up the stuff of enculturation, evolve gradually, imperceptibly, and largely without conscious effort on the part of members of the society. They “jest grow,” like Topsy. Regardless of their origin, however, they are very powerful, and any deviation from them is severely punished.

On the other hand, formal or deliberate education involves a self-conscious, deliberate selection of elements of the culture which are to be given special emphasis.\* Thus, our analysis would imply that the preferences and avoidances selected to be emphasized in schools would have been critically selected at all points. But this is not entirely correct. As a matter of fact, a good many things are taught in school largely because they have been taught before. They are customary. They are traditional. Many times,

if any questions are raised about such items, there is resistance to critical analysis. We have always taught algebra in the ninth grade; therefore, algebra should be taught in the ninth grade. Customs, traditions, and folkways frequently have great strength inside the schools as well as outside. One way of deciding what ought to be taught in school is to go ahead and continue to teach whatever has been taught before. But this is not the only way, and some would say that it is not the best way. In any case, however, in order for something to be taught in school it must somehow, in some way, have been judged important enough—that is *valuable* enough—to deserve a place in the school program. Thus, educational values are educational guides. We teach what somehow has been determined to be worth teaching.

Mere liking or disliking does not constitute valuing or devaluing. There is a difference. Some things are looked upon as “. . . admirable, honorable, to be approved of and striven for . . .”<sup>2</sup> Other things—even things that entertain or please us—we may view as not honorable, not admirable, not to be approved of, and not to be striven for. As Professor Ralph Barton Perry suggests, “. . . one can say ‘yes’ with reluctance or be glad to say ‘no.’”<sup>3</sup> Really to be against something means trying to prevent or destroy it. Really to be for something means trying to create and preserve it.<sup>4</sup> *By educational values, then, we mean those values judged admirable, honorable, and approvable so that men desire to create and preserve them through coming generations.*

Preservation of institutions, beliefs, and customs which are precious to men is to be accomplished as habits and loyalties conducive to such preservation are engendered in the young. Educational techniques for this purpose vary from age to age and from society to society, but the phenomenon of adult mem-

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Blinton, Balch, 1929), p. 31 E.

<sup>3</sup> R. B. Perry, *General Theory of Value* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co. Inc., 1926), p. 115.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

bers of a group in some fashion controlling the environment of the young is a universal one. Men have always been concerned to create or preserve things which are admirable, honorable, and approvable, and they have attempted actively and consciously to accomplish this by controlling the intellectual, social, and cultural environment of the young. This actual, conscious, purposeful, planned control of the environment of the young by older members of the group in the light of chosen values is what is meant by deliberate education.

The American public school system is, then, an institution for controlling the environment of the young so that they will grow up to create and preserve things admirable, honorable, and approvable. Its constituency is the citizenry of the nation. Men of various religious, political, and economic faiths have united on common ground in American communities to send their children to a common school.

## EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CONTROVERSY

Educational theory serves a unique function—a function to be differentiated from the functions of other specialties in the study of education, such as educational psychology, administration, methods of teaching, etc.\* We should examine some of the peculiarities, special emphases, and unique preoccupations of educational theory as a field of study.

### *The study of educational aims and content*

There is a strong tendency for educational theory to give its attention to "what" and "why" questions rather than "how" questions. Perhaps this is the feature which most clearly differentiates educational theory from educational psychology and methods: "What to do with these children and why?"

Getting it done, once choices have been made relative to the

"what" and "why" questions, is no mean task. Study of the psychology of learning and of methodology is never to be deprecated. Teachers are workmen; they are laborers. But they are not mere workmen. They have some responsibility to determine what should be taught. Heroic teachers—teachers who had "know-how"—fled Nazi Germany rather than teach what they believed was wrong. Norwegian teachers who had convictions about the *what* and the *why* made up an important block of resistance during the Quisling period in that country.

We have said that teachers have some responsibility. Parents and lay citizens will also wish to say something about what the children are taught in the schools which their taxes support. Though teachers sometimes bemoan the lack of interest of parents in the school, there is little evidence that parents will abdicate within the foreseeable future the position of influence that they do hold. American parents may be depended upon to retain some degree of control over what is taught. At the same time, they not only tolerate, but frequently demand proposals from the teachers on this score. A part of the job of a teacher in a modern American school system is to take some leadership in determining what pupils should be taught.

### *The study of unresolved issues*

Another characteristic of educational theory is that it gives special concern to realms of uncertainty in educational work. That is, there is special interest in and concern about issues upon which people sharply disagree. Why is there disagreement about the "3 R's" in modern elementary schools? Are the "3 R's" important? Why? Again, why the disagreement about whether religion should be taught in high schools? And should the high schools give vocational training? Should the high schools prepare for college or prepare young people for jobs? What does the term *liberal education* mean? These are some of the current controversial issues with which educational theory is concerned.

Therefore, it is to be expected that educational theory will probe into areas where people are emotionally sensitive. The very existence of a controversial issue implies:

- 1) that there is as yet insufficient experimental evidence to give conclusive answers about the matter; and
- 2) that different values are somehow clashing and competing.

### *The study of customary assumptions*

We have said that educational theory differs from some other educational specialties in its preoccupation with "what" and "why" questions in education, and in its purposeful, deliberate searching out and concentrating upon controversial issues. A third tendency or special emphasis in educational theory is a persisting examination of things that are taken for granted; for custom sometimes clashes with real social needs. For a long time most high schools offered a beginning algebra course in the ninth grade, frequently requiring the course of all students. That is, ninth-grade algebra became a custom. When some educators began to ask *Why?* this custom came to be modified in schools. In the process, however, the matter became a controversial issue, with parents and community leaders arguing about whether algebra should be taught. It remains customary for girls to take courses in home economics while boys take courses in shop. Some educators have asked whether there is any reason why this difference in curriculum on the basis of sex should exist. Does modern society, the way most young couples run their homes, justify this custom in school? It might be suggested that nowadays women are doing enough home repairing and men are doing enough cooking and dishwashing and mending so that a shop course should be required of every girl and a home economics course of every boy. One of the best examples of the persistence of custom is probably the summer vacation. Having originated when children and adolescents could help at home with farm work during these months, the custom remains. In big cities

especially, in the twentieth century, the custom of the summer vacation in schools might be opened to question.

One more example. It has been customary for many years to think of a liberal education as including extended study of classical languages and literature. Why is this? Does it make sense, in the United States of the twentieth century? Do the Greeks and Romans deserve as much time as we give them? Or are there more truly liberating contemporary studies? Just why do so many people think that an educated man should have read Chaucer and Shakespeare? Is this customary conception of what is involved in a liberal education justifiable nowadays? What are the assumptions behind this custom?

Since schools cannot teach everything, the public, tax-supported schools of our country should teach the most important things. Now, for our culture and in our day, which things are most important after all? Who should choose the content of education? What criteria of choice are appropriate? What should the content of education be? These are fundamental questions to be explored in this book.

### *Summary*

The term *education* may be used on three levels of meaning: 1) enculturation, 2) formal or deliberate education, 3) public school education. Here we are primarily concerned with the third meaning; that is, this work is a discussion of education with special reference to the public, tax-supported schools in the United States.

Things taught in schools are things somehow considered important enough to spend time upon in school. Thus, the work of the school is defined on the ground of judgments as to which things are of vital importance in the society in which the schools exist. Such judgments are value judgments in education. A value is not the same as "something merely liked." As we judge that something should be taught in school, we say not only that we like or enjoy it, but also, that we consider it important that children be taught to like and enjoy it too. There must be some agreement on basic values for a society to

hang together. Dictators maintain a core of agreement by force. An open society risks social disintegration in the faith that if people argue and discuss, majority agreement will emerge.

When violent arguments about the schools break out, the possible danger of social disintegration must be kept in mind. Arguments about what schools ought to be doing go to the roots of a culture. Teachers must take leadership in their communities in these debates about education. The study of educational theory may contribute to their sensitivity and effectiveness in this role. For educational theory as a field of study deals primarily with educational aims and content, unresolved issues of educational policy and practice, and the critical examination of customary assumptions in education. Finally, a central concern of educational theory is with value questions in education.

### Notes

- p. 5    ". . . conflicting points of view are represented by various authorities and various social groups."

Anthologies of contemporary criticisms of the schools are: C. Winfield Scott and Clyde M. Hill, eds., *Public Education under Criticism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1954); Henry J. Ehlers and Gordon C. Lee, eds., *Crucial Issues in Education* (New York: Holt, Revised Edition, 1959). See also Mortimer Smith, *And Madly Teach* (Chicago: Regnery, 1949), as well as Smith, *The Diminished Mind* (Chicago: Regnery, 1954). Considerable public interest has apparently been shown toward two books by Arthur E. Bestor: *Educational Wastelands* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953); *The Restoration of Learning* (New York: Knopf, 1955). Bestor has also written in popular periodicals such as *United States News* (various issues, 1955-58). Albert Lynd, *Quackery in the Public Schools* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953) is another work severely critical of modern public education in the United States. See also John Keats, *Schools without Scholars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958). Small books and articles in popular periodicals by Howard Whitman, Joan Dunn, and A. Whitney Griswold are additional examples of the literature of controversy regarding public education in the United States. Sober analysis of the strengths

and weaknesses of American public education, and assessments of the criticisms are provided by Paul Woodring in *Let's Talk Sense about Our Schools* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953) and *A Fourth of a Nation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957). Finally, however, Woodring remains severely critical of certain major trends in public education and would propose changes in the schools to give more attention to the traditional intellectual disciplines.

- p. 10 " . . . formal or deliberate education involves . . . self-conscious, deliberate selection . . ."

The definition of education developed here as involving deliberate selection is at odds with certain more or less popular stereotypes of what education is. If, as argued here, we teach what has been selected as most important, and if we decide what is most important according to chosen standards of value, not everything is taught. The school or university does not, strictly speaking, "survey the universe"—only selected parts of it. Or again, the school does not exist merely to facilitate growth—it represents a mode of selective control and direction of growth. A fundamental and persisting theme of this book is the search for criteria of educational selection. If the inescapable demands of this obligation are not finally granted by the reader, much of what follows will undoubtedly appear to be irrelevant or inconsequential.

- p. 12 "Educational theory serves a unique function . . ."

Statements of the nature and function of philosophy of education, not all of which square completely with the position taken here, are to be found in Harry Brondy, *Building a Philosophy of Education* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1954), John S. Brubacher, *Modern Philosophies of Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Revised Edition, 1950), J. Donald Butler, *Four Philosophies and their Practice in Education and Religion* (New York: Harper, Revised Edition, 1957), Theodore Brameld, *Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Dryden, 1955), Philip Phenix, *Philosophy of Education* (New York: Holt, 1957). See also two Yearbooks of the National Society for the Study of Education: *Philosophies of Education*, Forty-first Yearbook, Part I



(Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Co., 1942); *Modern Philosophies and Education*, Fifty-fourth Yearbook, Part I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955). One issue of the *Harvard Educational Review* (XXVI, 2, Spring, 1956) was devoted to philosophy of education, with special reference to its nature and function. For a statement of the nature and function of philosophy of education which was adopted by the National Philosophy of Education Society, see Committee on the Nature and Function of the Discipline of the Philosophy of Education, of the Philosophy of Education Society, "The Distinctive Nature of the Discipline of the Philosophy of Education," *Educational Theory*, IV, 1 (January, 1954), pp. 1-3. For statements that raise serious critical questions about the role of philosophy of education as a directive professional discipline, see Everett J. Kircher, "Philosophy of Education—Directive Doctrine or Liberal Discipline?" *Educational Theory*, V, 4 (October, 1955), pp. 220-29, and Sidney Hook, "The Scope of Philosophy of Education," *Harvard Educational Review*, XXVI, 2 (Spring, 1956), pp. 145-48. An important contribution to the literature having to do with definition of the nature and function of philosophy of education is Foster McMurray, "Preface to an Autonomous Discipline of Education," *Educational Theory*, V, 3 (July, 1955), pp. 129-40. McMurray builds a systematic critique of the common tendency to derive a position in philosophy of education from schools of general philosophy. Robert L. Brackenbury, *Getting down to Cases* (New York: Putnam, 1959) develops and illustrates the notion that alternative theories provide alternative solutions for educational problems. Thus, differences at the level of policy may be intelligently identified and examined as specific cases are considered. Brackenbury claims that this approach is an inductive one in contrast to the more commonly used method of deducing educational practice from a philosophical position.

**I** Traditions,  
Principles, and  
World views in  
American  
Educational  
Policy

## CHAPTER TWO

# Colonial America: the Principles of its Educational Policy

IT HAS BEEN ARGUED that education is inescapably a value-charged activity—that teachers must make choices about which things are admirable, honorable, and to be preserved and extended in the public schools. It has been claimed that, while all citizens have a part in formulating these choices—that is, in formulating public school policy, teachers have a special responsibility because they are teachers. Any position concerning educational policy must be grounded in the character of the culture. We mean by this that choices as to educational policy are always limited and controlled by the social realities out of which the school has grown. This way, educational theory is seen to be inextricably bound up with educational history. Thus it is not true that we can have whatever kind of school system we can imagine. A school system is an expression of the history and culture of a people. It takes institutional form in social epochs. Its character is influenced by the political, economic, and intellectual developments taking place within the society. Its role is limited by the aspirations of the people by whose will it is sustained. Its aims are extensions of those traditions which have been taken as authentic.

## PURITAN SCHOOLS

The beginnings of educational activity in this country, at the level of the common school as well as the college level, were religious. The American colonial fathers had a coherent, consistent scheme of educational values centered in theology and ecclesiastical rulings. They believed that saints were wiser than other people because they knew God. In one way or another, everything done in schools tied into the over-all purpose which was the development of saints.\* To be sure, in Massachusetts, education was ordered by the state; but church and state were one. A person who was not a member of a Puritan congregation could not vote in Massachusetts until 1691. Under such a situation, *teachers chosen to work in the school system established by the laws of 1642 and 1647 were of unquestioned orthodoxy.*<sup>1</sup> Mastery of essential theological truths was demanded in the schools. Religion was of vital importance. Youngsters were to know and understand the laws of God as well as the laws of the country. The state placed this obligation upon parents and guardians to hold them responsible for children under their care.<sup>2</sup> Again, in the familiar Massachusetts law of 1647, the prime purpose of the schools was said to be to outwit "the old deluder Satan."

This situation, while most extreme in Massachusetts, was true also of the other colonies. To be sure, there were Anglicans, Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, Friends—as well as Scottish, English, and Dutch Calvinists—but these people were deeply imbued with their religious outlook and the total philosophy of life that flowed from it. There was a generally accepted world view in colonial America. There were minor differences of

<sup>1</sup> Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), I, 179-80.

<sup>2</sup> E. P. Cubberley, *Readings in the History of Education* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), p. 298.

interpretation which gave rise to the various religious sects, but answers to the big questions about the universe and man's nature and destiny in it had been given. The colonists had settled on a selection of things honorable, admirable, and approvable. Thus, teachers had little freedom to formulate their own philosophies of education and to function as community leaders. Colonial education was profoundly philosophical—so much so that teachers had to accept the basic tenets of the official philosophy. To be sure, colonial provisions for education took account of the vocational and political purposes of the schools. However, the colonists did not maintain the separation of religion, vocation, and citizenship characteristic of modern society. They could not make such a separation because the Christian world view to which they were committed said that in the last analysis men had to be good Christians in order to be good citizens. The seventeenth-century founding fathers were not other-worldly ascetics. They were men who believed in and practiced hard work and involved themselves vigorously in mundane affairs. The point is not that affairs of this world were neglected, but rather, that affairs in this world were all seen in their bearing on man's relationship to God. That this involved a theory of knowledge and scholarship is made clear in the Harvard Rules of 1642, wherein students are admonished that Christ is the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.<sup>3</sup> It was not maintained that religious knowledge is the only knowledge, but rather, that whatever the knowledge may be, it must be seen under the total aspect of Christian doctrine and faith.

It has been asserted that the outlook described above was held throughout the colonies in general, and was not restricted to Massachusetts alone. The Connecticut education law of 1650 specified that children must be made to learn by heart some short orthodox catechism.<sup>4</sup> The Quakers, in the Pennsylvania

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

education law of 1683, gave as the objective of instruction in reading that children be able to read the Scriptures and write by the time they are twelve years old.<sup>5</sup> Restrictions on the franchise existing in other colonies indicate educational restrictions which must have operated accordingly. Rhode Island approached freedom before 1719, but in that year not only atheists, who had been subject to exclusion previously, but also Catholics were denied toleration.<sup>6</sup> Pennsylvania refused the franchise to Catholics, Jews, and persons who did not believe in God.<sup>7</sup> Maryland's Catholic founders had defended toleration of religious diversity, perhaps in part to insure freedom for Catholics in a predominantly Protestant region. However, when Maryland passed under Church of England control, religious restrictions appeared.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the greatest degree of religious toleration existed in the middle colonies where several sects found it necessary to live together.<sup>9</sup>

James Truslow Adams has claimed that the prime object in the colonies was to make good Christians rather than to make good citizens.<sup>10</sup> Father Geoffrey O'Connell, a spokesman of the Roman Catholic Church in America, laments the passing of the Christian scheme of guiding values from American education. Referring to Adams' claim that colonial schools aimed to make good Christians rather than good citizens, he suggests that naturalism would not have gained the foothold that it has in the twentieth century if these ideas had prevailed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 306-07.

<sup>6</sup> Howard K. Beale, *A History of Freedom of Teaching in American Schools*, Report of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association (New York: Scribners, 1941), p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> J. T. Adams, *The March of Democracy* (New York: Scribners, 1932), I, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey O'Connell, *Naturalism in American Education* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1936), p. 35.

Formal education in colonial America must, then, be understood as the effort of Christian adults to teach their young. Truths to be taught were God's truths. The false and the evil could not be tolerated. To the colonists—seventeenth century Christians—the world was God's world, and the world could only be known as God was rightly known. Thus, the truths which they taught their young were God's truths, and the world which was to be known was God's world.

We arrive at the conclusion that a philosophy of education certainly operated in colonial America. Colonial schools were not neutral, and teachers were to support and propagate morality and values; but the philosophy of education was an official one from which deviation was not tolerated. It was a part of the job of teachers to accept and propagate the official ideology. The earliest schools in this country were clearly not neutral schools. They indoctrinated. There was an official philosophy of education enforced by the state.

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

A search for early American moral, philosophical, political, and educational traditions must concern itself not only with seventeenth century colonial America, but also with the eighteenth century mentality. The scholarly founding fathers of the late eighteenth century held a world view different from that of their seventeenth century predecessors. Many of them had been strongly influenced by the more rationalistic, secular, non-religious philosophies of the Enlightenment. Thus, their view was that educated men were better citizens because they knew more about the orderly, reasonable, mechanically constructed world. The educational implication was to develop scholars capable of taking social leadership because they knew and understood more about the world than other men.

*Religion and citizenship separated*

An important feature of eighteenth century philosophical deism for educational theory was the degree of separation of religion and citizenship which it implied. Many scholars have discussed the influence of deistic conceptions on the thinking of members of the Constitutional Convention. The idea that religion and theology are not to be closely linked with citizenship is applied to the United States Government in the First Amendment to the Constitution. The principle is reinforced and underwritten in other documents of the period.

Article II of the Declaration of Rights of the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 makes an even more explicit separation of religion and politics than do the national documents. It is stipulated by the Pennsylvania forefathers that all men have a "natural and unalienable right" to worship God as they see fit. No man can be compelled to attend religious worship or contribute to the support of any religious group, and no man who acknowledges that God exists can be deprived of civil rights.<sup>12</sup> This is, indeed, a far cry from the theocratic conception of citizenship which prevailed in the colonies in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, there remains one positive theological requirement. Although no man who acknowledges the being of a God can be deprived of his civil rights, the implication is that an atheist may be denied rights in the compact.

In Pennsylvania, then, decisions were to be made by the citizens. Article II, to which reference is made above, implies that political truth has no relationship to religious belief so long as a man holds to some conception of God. In Article VII, it is asserted that political truths sufficiently dependable so that the destiny of the state may rest upon them can be discovered and stated so that men may pool their best judgments. This article

<sup>12</sup> Francis Newton Thorpe, ed., *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and other Organic Laws*, 59th Congress, H.R. Document No. 557 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1907), V, 3082.



guarantees free elections and states that all free men "having a sufficient evident common interest with and attachment to the community" can participate in elections and run for office.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in Pennsylvania, if a man believed that God existed and if he were a loyal member of the community, he could have an equal voice in the assembly of free citizens. Finally, however, in Article XIV of the same Declaration of Rights, we find a proviso which apparently reflects eighteenth century deistic thought. To keep a government free and sound, its leaders must be men of intellect and character. The people are admonished to pay particular attention to virtues such as justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality as they select their officers. A "frequent recurrence to fundamental principles" is demanded.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Regulating values deemed necessary*

It is clear that the Pennsylvania fathers were aware of a problem involved in the franchise. There are necessary canons to any bill of rights. Anarchy is only to be avoided if there is some core of "fundamental principles." The balance-of-power structure of the state governments, not to speak of the federal organization, bears testimony to a belief by the founding fathers that there must be an appeal to regulating values if democracy is to survive.

According to William Seal Carpenter,<sup>15</sup> John Adams was the intellectual leader who made the greatest contribution in thinking through the political techniques of representative democracy in America in the late eighteenth century. It was John Adams who insisted that the purpose of representation was not only to make the will of the people known in the legislative assembly, but also to give more power of decision to those wiser. Adams concluded that it is utterly impossible for all to assemble to make laws. Thus, a first step is to "depute power from the many to a

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 3083.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 3093-84.

<sup>15</sup> William Seal Carpenter, *The Development of American Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930), p. 63.

few of the most wise and good."<sup>16</sup> Again, the author of *The People the Best Governors*, an anonymous pamphlet widely distributed during the revolutionary period, urges that a lasting government must be erected on the basis of "some invariable principles."<sup>17</sup> But what were the principles? Where are they to be found?

### *The primacy of reason*

Jefferson maintained that civil rights have no dependence on religious opinions. This expresses a view held by many in his day. Here is the upshot for social practice of the eighteenth century Enlightenment philosophies. Theology and citizenship have been divorced. It is the natural right of men to believe what they will about ultimate matters. But Jefferson, like Adams and the anonymous author of *The People the Best Governors*, appeals to a higher authority of "reason" or "wisdom." In his 1801 inaugural address, obviously concerned about the arguments of the campaign, he asserts that although the will of the majority is always to prevail, it must be reasonable.<sup>18</sup> Jefferson's intense faith in reason, and in orderly procedures to be brought about by its exercise in the affairs of men, is expressed in his statements about education. In his plan for organizing education in Virginia, only the superior students are to go beyond elementary school. Every effort is to be made to select from the masses leaders of superior native ability. Those selected to receive further education at the expense of the state are to study classical languages and higher sciences.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Jefferson's idea for education in Virginia involves separation of religion and the schools, but this is not to exclude final standards from education. There are

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> H. A. Cushing, "The People the Best Governors," *American Historical Review*, I (January, 1896), 286.

<sup>18</sup> T. C. Pease and A. S. Roberts, *Selected Readings in American History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928), p. 232.

<sup>19</sup> Charles F. Arrowood, ed., *Thomas Jefferson and Education in a Republic* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1930), pp. 83-84.

differences among men based upon the degree to which they are able to develop natural reason.

### *The selective function of education*

Jefferson believed passionately in education. He believed that it was the necessary means for realizing the social values of freedom in the new nation. It was not to eliminate an aristocracy, however, that Jefferson recommended public education. It was, rather, to discover, educate, and create continuously a genuine aristocracy of reasonable men, from whatever background of wealth and social class they came as children. Certainly Jefferson's name belongs in the list of those who have advanced the cause of democratic education. However, Jefferson's position on education was significantly different from that of twentieth century apostles of democratic education, like John Dewey. Jefferson is different because he assumes that society is divided into two classes—a vast majority of laborers who are to receive a minimum of schooling, and a much smaller group of intellectually superior persons who are to become the social leaders.<sup>20</sup> There is a sense in which the primary purpose of public education, or at least one of its major purposes as Jefferson sees it, is to insure the perpetuation of a natural aristocracy.

### *A secular conception of educational values*

Thus, there are clear indications that a secular conception of educational values has emerged in the eighteenth century. The political documents suggest that citizenship is linked less closely with religion and theology than in an earlier period. The Declaration of Independence, the Federal Constitution including the first ten amendments which we know as the Bill of Rights, and some of the early state constitutions express this secular philoso-

<sup>20</sup> Merle E. Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators*, Report of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association, Part X (New York: Scribners, 1935), pp. 44-45.

phy of reason. In Jefferson's proposals for education in Virginia and in his planning for the University of Virginia we see this world view and this political philosophy applied to education. It is much more like twentieth century secular philosophies of education, such as that of Dewey, than the deeply religious view of the Puritans. We note, however, the degree to which it depends upon the assumption of a reasonable, orderly universe, which lends itself to the application of reason. It provides for reasonable freedom for those who believe in and are capable of exercising the power of reason.\*

The eighteenth century outlook on education opens the door to non-religious, non-authoritarian types of educational programs. It is questionable, however, whether a kind of individualistic, personal-adjustment educational theory like some we hear about nowadays fits into this pattern. Some have asserted that contemporary public school education emphasizes personal, social, and vocational adjustment at the expense of reason.<sup>21</sup> The Jeffersonian conception of the world, man, and his destiny is neutral in regard to religion, but it is not really neutral philosophically. It finds in the life of reason in a universe assumed to be rational a new kind of self-corrective authority.

Was Jefferson's educational philosophy one which advocated the neutral school? Not so. Jefferson's authority is the reasoning man in a rational universe. This was so important to Jefferson that he advocated a highly selective public school system. The most capable scholars were to be selected through progressive eliminations and, as young people, were to receive further training at public expense to ready them for leadership. The principles of morality and citizenship were considered to be the principles of reason. Scholars—brilliant students—are finally the ones who are capable of exercising reasonable leadership, and they therefore have most to do in defining and implementing

<sup>21</sup> See Arthur Bestor, *Educational Wastelands* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953), also *The Restoration of Learning* (New York: Knopf, 1953).

political and social values.\* Again from our modern secular point of view, there is no question that it is easier to get along with Jefferson than to reconcile our position with that of the Puritan fathers. Jefferson believed in an aristocracy of the intellect, and it may not oversimplify the facts too much to say that the Puritans advocated an aristocracy of saints while Jefferson advocated an aristocracy of scholars.

### NEUTRALITY REJECTED BY THE FOUNDING FATHERS

Neither in the Puritan nor in the Jeffersonian conceptions of education do we find traditions that support the notion that the school should concentrate primarily upon transmitting information. This is obvious in the era of the Puritans. The Jeffersonian point of view, on the other hand, identifies a conception of reason as establishing moral authority. As Carl Becker has shown, the Enlightenment thinkers like Jefferson had rejected the "heavenly city" of the seventeenth century Puritans, but they had made of *reason* a new heavenly city.<sup>22</sup>

We conclude, then, that in the educational ideals neither of the Puritans nor of the Enlightenment do we have an emphasis on moral and philosophical neutrality in educational work. In the one, the central emphasis seems to be upon the development of Christian character; in the other, the stress is on the selection and disciplining of reasonable men.

In summary, we recognize that American public education had its inception in philosophical contexts—first the Calvinistic world-view of the New England Puritans, later the Enlightenment rationalism of the founders of the Republic. The Puritan schools were certainly not neutral. Once again, the educational philosophy of the eighteenth century, with its emphasis upon

<sup>22</sup> See Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932).

reason, natural rights, and laws, was based upon a set of moral ideals. The careful restrictions on the franchise which operated in the early years of the Republic indicate that the founding fathers did not believe that sound judgment is merely a matter of counting noses. The seventeenth and eighteenth century founding fathers were thoroughly committed to an educational program that had moral content and that was grounded in clearly defined educational values.\*

### Notes

- p. 21 *"... the over-all purpose ... was the development of saints."*  
 The theocratic character of seventeenth century Puritanism has been emphasized here. Many scholars have also worked to show a democratic element in Puritanism. See, for instance, Ralph Barton Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York: Vanguard, 1944) and Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1939).
- p. 29 *"It provides for reasonable freedom for those who believe in and are capable of exercising the power of reason."*  
 Some religious leaders would insist that no conception of democracy is soundly based unless it affirms unequivocally that every man is precious because he is a child of God. This the Puritans believed. But upon what ground could the Enlightenment deists support universal suffrage? Is the unbelievably stupid, illiterate, slothful man also precious in their view? The mentality of the Jeffersonian democrat may lend itself to an apparent air of paternalism. It has been suggested that the avowedly democratic position of liberal intellectuals involves less than a complete and thoroughgoing faith in the wisdom of the people. Thus, was Franklin D. Roosevelt truly a man of the people, or was he an aristocrat convinced that his "enlightened" political and economic policy was best for them? Democrats like Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt might be contrasted, in this connection, with Democrats like Andrew Jackson and Harry Truman.

- p. 30 "Scholars . . . are finally the ones who are capable of exercising . . . leadership . . ."

Among nations, French democracy might appear to be grounded in the eighteenth century faith in the *enlightened* man. By contrast, modern British democracy as represented in the Labor Party, and American democracy as represented in the Democratic Party of Harry Truman might be seen as involving more faith in the common man, whether or not enlightened. Are the political ideals of the latter more consistent with an educational policy which de-emphasizes the moral function of the school?

- p. 31 "The . . . founding fathers were thoroughly committed to an educational program that had moral content . . ."

A scholarly treatment of seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth century educational traditions in America is Lawrence A. Cremin, *The American Common School, an Historic Conception* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1951). See also R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, *A History of Education in American Culture* (New York: Holt, 1953), and R. Freeman Butts, *The American Tradition in Religion and Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950). A very readable recent work in the history of American education is William E. Drake, *The American School in Transition* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955).

## CHAPTER THREE

# The Tradition of the Three R's in American Education

DURING THE FIRST half of the nineteenth century, the common man—the practical man of action—came into his own. Nineteenth century farmers and trappers apparently believed that no man was absolutely wiser than another. The “Three R’s” school expressed this notion; schooling meant training in basic skills, not necessarily in the arts of citizenship. The public school of today had its inception in the first half of the nineteenth century. Historic names of the public school movement are of the Jacksonian era. Horace Mann graduated from Brown University in 1819. Henry Barnard was teaching in Connecticut while Jackson was in the White House. Calvin H. Wiley graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1840. Caleb Mills began work at Wabash College in 1833. These men and others of like mind in other states led in the definition of the scope, purpose, and philosophy of the American public, tax-supported school. They themselves were not men of the soil; they were intellectuals, in many cases motivated by missionary zeal. These humanitarian leaders in the early nineteenth century public school movement succeeded, however, in persuading legislators of the value of the common school.



## LIMITATIONS ON NINETEENTH CENTURY SCHOOLING

The accomplishment of the educational evangelists in the train of Horace Mann before the Civil War was to establish the school as a public institution in the United States. They saw the public school as a powerful moral force contributing to the growing strength of a free society. However, various nineteenth century cultural influences worked to restrict and limit the social function of the schools.

### *Jacksonian anti-intellectualism*

While few of the leaders of the public school movement were themselves supporters of Jackson, the movement achieved success during and after Jackson's presidency. While the ardent supporters of Jackson gave little attention to public education, the one-room district school was, nevertheless, a part of the total social movement of the frontier which Jacksonian democracy represents. Jeffersonian democracy had involved the idea that political thinking and education for citizenship have no relation to religion. Jacksonian democracy apparently underwrites this, but adds that political wisdom has no relationship to educational background and moral or philosophical outlook. There is no rule of religion in the Puritan sense; what is more, there is no rule of reason in the sense of the Enlightenment.

### *Frontier revivalism*

Howard K. Beale convincingly argues that while the evangelical frontier churches fostered an interest in education for literacy so that people could read the Bible, the emphasis upon emotional revelation carried with it a distrust of knowledge in social, moral, and religious areas. This influence has persisted, according to Beale, so that even today a characteristic American trait is a

tendency to take an emotional rather than an intellectual approach to important problems. A certain pervading anti-intellectualism has been fed by a tradition suggesting that too much learning proves a device of the Devil. Furthermore, claims Beale, the devotion to the Book fostered a certain authoritarianism, an acceptance of the Word rather than critical analysis and discussion.<sup>1</sup> The thrust of Beale's argument is that evangelicism, like Jacksonian political ideas, fostered artificial distinctions of the parts of knowledge. Political wisdom was thought to have relationship neither to book learning nor to religious nurture. Evangelical mysticism encouraged this compartmentalization by its emphasis on the possibility of knowledge of ultimate things by cataclysmic, emotional revelation. The revivals and camp meetings spread throughout the frontier country. In these emotional experiences, people believed that they found truth through their mystical experiences with the divine source of all wisdom. Thus, for people who saw the big moral and philosophical questions as settled not so much by thinking and study as by direct communion with God in prayer, the school did not need to give much attention to moral and philosophical problems.

### *Sectarian antagonisms*

Another cultural influence which tended to restrict the role of the nineteenth century school in moral education was the fierce antagonisms among the revivalist sects. As communities grew larger and less homogeneous, it often became difficult for parents to find common religious ground. One reason why the schools eventually lost their religious orientation was that each sect became convinced that only a policy of religious neutrality would keep out the heresies of its rivals.<sup>2</sup> Each one thought it had the truth; if Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregation-

<sup>1</sup> Howard K. Beale, *A History of Freedom of Teaching in American Schools*, Report of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association (New York: Scribners, 1941), pp. 70-71.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208 ff.

alists were to send their children to the same public school, they were going to see to it that the beliefs of their children in matters of faith and morals were not undermined. Thus, a neutral public school, concentrating on reading, writing, and arithmetic, was necessary. The non-religious, non-political, common school was resorted to partly because of the suspicions of interest groups toward one another. The compromise was to exclude both politics and religion.<sup>3</sup>

### *Organization of the schools*

The general acceptance of the "graded school" after the Civil War encouraged formalized, factual presentation of subject matter. The graded schools made it necessary to measure the accomplishments of pupils to determine promotion. Memorization of facts could be measured, but development of ethical character could not be. Consequently, the "school machine" came to rest on facts and memorization of facts. Book assignments and recitation which was reproduction on call was the mode. The teacher, in turn, was under the control of a printed course of study, prescribed textbooks, and standardized examinations.<sup>4</sup> This educational practice, while frequently involving rote memorization of materials having some sort of moral significance, was not a practice which involved either students or teachers in value problems. The facts of history and government, but not citizenship, were the concern. Words printed in books, not understanding of the world around them, received the attention of children in the schools.<sup>5</sup> Reisner, writing in 1930, asserts that this school situation continues. Despite developments in educational psychology and theory, the teaching in twentieth century public schools is often similar to that of the mid-nineteenth century. According to Reisner, every movement for school

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> E. H. Reisner, *The Evolution of the Common School* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 427.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 537-38.

reform from the time of the Civil War to the years of the Great Depression was aimed at the mechanical system fostered by the graded school.<sup>6</sup>

### *Nineteenth century philosophy*

Finally, an effort to locate the ideological and cultural foundations of educational theory in the nineteenth century cannot ignore the continuing influence of the philosophy of reason of the Enlightenment and the impact of German idealism upon American intellectuals. Apparently Horace Mann looked upon impartiality as a positive educational value. He argued that the school must be above partisan rivalries; his view was that it is not the job of the school to inculcate opinions and beliefs. The school is dedicated to the pursuit of truth, and this means the ability to see a problem whole, and impartially.<sup>7</sup> Henry Barnard, like Mann, consistently maintained during the Civil War period, as in the debates preceding the war, that the educator must remain non-partisan and aloof, and that political differences lie outside the field of educational effort and discussion.<sup>8</sup> Neutrality, aloofness, and disinterestedness were educational values to which Barnard maintained high loyalty.<sup>9</sup> Again, William Torrey Harris, the most powerful leader in American public education after the Civil War, stressed the objectivity of truth and the importance of discipline and authority in school work. While he and those who understood his philosophy were concerned about the moral effects of discipline and authority, classroom teachers were likely to interpret it in the narrow sense. For Harris emphasized authority, discipline, textbook methods, and traditional subject matter. Such discipline and authority, Harris reasoned, were to encourage self-realization in the lofty sense. In the hands

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

<sup>7</sup> Merle E. Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators*, Report of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association, Part X, (New York: Scribners, 1935), p. 126.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166 ff.

of the average teacher, authoritarian discipline and conformity may well have been the more frequent outcome.<sup>10</sup>

## CONTROL OF THE SCHOOLS

One hundred years ago the schools were paid for and controlled by the fathers and mothers of the children attending the schools. The child was considered to be the ward of his parents. The parents in the neighborhood decided what their children should be taught in school. Minority privileges involved the right of parents to place their children in parochial schools if they so desired. But minority penalties such as compulsory school attendance and principles of common law regulating parent-child relationships might be invoked. This was a workable arrangement. Inasmuch as the school curriculum was meagerly utilitarian, inasmuch as most property owners were parents, inasmuch as schools were small and simply administered, they were democratic institutions in the sense that they were controlled directly by the people of the community.

However, with the establishment of public secondary schools and with the expansion of offerings in the historical and social fields at the turn of the century came certain industrial and social changes which influenced location of authority in public education. American society changed from a primarily agricultural to an industrial one. Large cities grew up, and along with the growth in cities came a corresponding growth of city school systems. City school boards acting with the advice and counsel of the city superintendent of schools came to make most of the decisions. State departments of education became tremendously powerful, often to the point of recommending textbooks, and in nearly all states to the point of specifying teacher training requirements. Some growth in the influence of the United States Office of Education took place, and there was expansion of the

<sup>10</sup> Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators*, p. 336.

federal government into educational programs coordinated with or superimposed upon those of the communities.

Within local communities, public-spirited and progressive school boards increasingly adopted the attitude of sanctioning the judgment of the superintendent on professional matters, restricting their activity in the main to one of trusteeship of school funds. A high percentage of the parents in big cities came to be renters rather than property owners. Consequently, they paid their school taxes painlessly as indirect taxes, and became indifferent to school policy except as some personal dissatisfaction developed. Thus, policy-making and curriculum construction increasingly came to be done by members of the teaching profession rather than by the parents. The complexity of the modern school systems made many school problems more difficult for the layman to understand. Moreover, many intelligent citizens deliberately adopted the attitude that teachers were specialists who should be allowed to ply their trade without lay interference. The philosophy of education held consciously or accepted more or less unconsciously by teacher education institutions, state departments of education, and in-service teachers and administrators was expressed in school practices. A body of professional literature on education came into being. Courses in education came to be offered by reputable colleges and universities, and education was recognized by university graduate schools as a field in which candidates for advanced degrees might study. That is, education came to be looked upon as a specialized field of professional study and practice.

These more recent developments connected with the rise of professional education in the United States did not, however, result in the elimination of local school boards and committees. There was continued support, among both professional educators and laymen, for the local school board as a policy-making body, and school issues continued to generate much interest in many American communities.

## THE THREE R's TODAY

The attitudes of middle-class citizens and school board members today have much in common with those of our forebears who supported the "three R's" school. A direct, realistic essentialism, more or less clearly defined, has, until very recently, been the layman's philosophy of education. The term *essentialism* came into popular use in the fourth decade of the present century as a label for rallying banner under which critics of the progressive education movement might operate. That the term was aptly chosen may be indicated by its subsequent use by all parties in educational parlance. However, educational essentialists came into the movement out of widely differing educational and philosophical backgrounds. William C. Bagley was a scientific humanist, although not a pragmatist; Frederick S. Breed called himself a realist; Michael Demishkevich was an idealist; Isaac L. Kandel and William W. Brickman are literary humanists. Bagley and Breed were a part of the science-of-education movement, interested in the efforts to apply methods of quantification characteristic of the physical sciences to educational work, although not themselves educational technologists. In a very real sense, however, the learned educational leaders who supported essentialism in the 1930's have since that time strengthened the earlier nineteenth century influences enumerated above. This is due in large part, however, to their extremely critical reaction to certain features of progressivism.

*Basic doctrines of essentialism*

Contemporary essentialism gives central emphasis to the idea that the main job of the school is to transmit knowledge. The home, the church, and social-political institutions of the adult community carry great responsibility for the moral education of the young. Impartiality and objectivity are positive values in the school, which is that social institution dedicated to knowledge

and scholarship.\* There must be some criteria for the selection of subject matter, but the criteria for selection do not necessarily involve reference to value preferences. Whether or not something is to be taught in the public school is determined by how certain we are of it. What is *known* is to be taught. Whether an idea is needed or not is a less significant consideration than whether an idea is certain or not. Not the field of human needs but the field of certified knowledge is that within which the school should operate. How true is it? Is it proved? Is it certain? Do we know that it is so? These are the questions which should be asked in determining which things should be studied in school. The teacher is to work around in these established facts, select those for teaching which are appropriate at the maturity level of his students and those which are prerequisite for mastery of others. Mastery of knowledge is an important educational objective; having staked out the limits of knowledge, the technique of transmitting as much of it as possible to students becomes important. This may mean that the field of natural science is a primary resource, because of the high degree of certainty of many of the findings there. More care will be required in the social studies because of the greater difficulty here of separating verified knowledge from opinions.<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that a teacher is not to form opinions on matters of social concern. As a citizen, he may certainly take sides from time to time, but as a teacher he may not. In his function as teacher, he introduces hypotheses and theories with great caution in his classroom work, always identifying them as such so that they will be distinguished from verified fact.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the degree of certainty of the findings is a standard by which foundations for beliefs and conclusions in any area may be laid. This criterion applies when moral questions are at stake,

<sup>11</sup> F. S. Breed, *Education and the New Realism* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.



as well as in purely descriptive inquiries. Objective impartial knowledge of what others have valued—of human interests—may determine the moral commitments of individuals and groups. The foundation for the curriculum of the schools and, for that matter, for political action, is the realm of verified knowledge. Value judgments, upon which moral choices rest, may be based on the facts of human interests.<sup>13</sup> The individual can formulate his opinions and arrive at his moral commitments as he becomes aware of the interests of his fellows. The function of the school in this area of moral choice is to present these descriptions—that is, the descriptions of evaluations and preferences of individuals and groups as these can be located by social analysis. Frederick S. Breed finds philosophical justification for these views in the position that there is an objective world of entities in relationship to one another independent of mind.\* He claims that to hold this view is to insist that mental content is externally supplied, that truth depends upon satisfaction of fact, and that education and life basically are adjustment to a self-existent and antecedent social and physical world.<sup>14</sup>

While essentialists such as Bagley, Kandel, and Brickman<sup>15</sup> have not been in complete philosophical agreement with Breed, they would agree with him in his strong emphasis upon the importance of verified knowledge as the backbone of the school

<sup>13</sup> F. S. Breed, "Education and the Realistic Outlook," in *Philosophies of Education*, National Society for the Study of Education, Forty first Yearbook, Part I (Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Co., 1942), pp. 135-36.

<sup>14</sup> Breed, *Education and the New Realism*, pp. 139 ff. See also F. S. Breed, "Has the Progressive a Monopoly on Democratic Education?" *Education*, October, 1939, pp. 87-91.

<sup>15</sup> See Theodore Brameld, *Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Dryden, 1955), pp. 239-40, and John T. Wahlquist, *The Philosophy of American Education* (New York: Ronald, 1942), pp. 115-130, for accounts of the Essentialist Committee for the Advancement of Education, of which Bagley and Kandel were members. At mid century Professor W. W. Brickman of New York University, editor of the educational journal *School and Society*, remained perhaps the outstanding American educator advocating essentialism as a form of educational theory and policy. See W. W. Brickman, "Essentialism Ten Years After," *School and Society*, May 15, 1948.

curriculum. While defining *knowledge* in somewhat different ways, essentialists have been in agreement that the public schools deal with knowledge when they properly fulfill their function in a democratic society. They believe that there are bodies of objective knowledge about reality, and that the content of the curriculum should not be reduced to mere opinion. They maintain that the essentials of reality are to be known. They maintain that these essentials are invariable and dependable parts of reality and, hence, should make up the core of the work of the schools.

### *Difficulties in an essentialist view*

To hold to this position has become increasingly difficult in recent years. The spread of the scientific method in human-social as well as physical-scientific fields has demonstrated that "facts" relate to the purposes of scholars and to the contexts in which problems arise.\* To be sure, the aim of critical, scientific method is to arrive at conclusions that will be impartially and objectively dependable, as if they described an independent, self-existent objective world. But knowledge varies tremendously on this score; some knowledge is considerably more exact than other knowledge. In fields such as applied physics and mechanics, there is a high degree of exactness; that is, upon a given choice and an action in line with that choice, consequences can be predicted with nearly absolute certainty. On the other hand, much knowledge is of a low degree of exactness; that is, upon a given choice and an action in line with that choice, consequences may be predicted only in general terms.

Knowledge also varies in degree of simplicity. The knowledge may leave only one choice issuing in action with one easily identified consequence. On the other hand, most situations are highly complex. Often the choice and the actions in line with that choice involve other human beings and extend over a long period of

time. In such cases the consequences are complex and are not easily identified. Knowledge thus varies in degree of simplicity as in degree of exactness. Generally, the more simple the item of knowledge, the more exact it is. However, this is not always the case.

Knowledge that is exact and simple is the kind of knowledge forming the body of modern technological information. Plans can be made, directions can be given, and consequences can be predicted with a very high degree of accuracy. Thus standardization of products and interchangeability of parts are possible. Such knowledge is composed of exact and simple items so that directions regarding choice-action-consequences hold as stated, largely without regard for the dispositions and preferences of the human beings performing the operations. Such knowledge is frequently called objective knowledge.

Where objective knowledge is available, decision may be controlled by the near-absolute predictability of consequences. Situations may be technological situations in which the "know-how" is available and dependable. In a technological situation, the question of how to act is resolved as soon as the individual lays hold upon available knowledge. Men in such situations may not need theory to help them choose. On the other hand, in situations where knowledge is highly inexact and complex rather than simple and exact, theory must function to direct choice. For in such situations exact prediction is impossible; thus, choice and action must proceed in the light of hypotheses and beliefs.

Sometimes, of course, the constructing of beliefs is a kind of speculative revery. Such speculative constructs often function fruitfully in guiding choice in complex situations. On the other hand, such free reflection sometimes issues in systems remarkable for their beauty and logical consistency, but subject to grave inadequacies when used concretely to guide choice. As the inadequacy of a speculative system becomes evident, more critical scholarship frequently appears. The critical approach involves

a more intensive effort to formulate beliefs and hypotheses that will withstand critical examination and test.

*Essentialism an inadequate philosophy of education*

Teachers and those directly concerned with the nurture of the young are pressed to engage responsibly in formulating guiding principles for action which frequently go beyond the simple and the exact. For just as action is inescapable so long as life goes on, so growth and maturation of the young wait for no man. Where precise objective knowledge is unavailable, it may be that teaching must venture critically formulated beliefs and hypotheses which go beyond available evidence. This is to say that teachers do not fulfill their proper social obligation by refusing to teach at all in areas of need where evidence is inconclusive. In other words, the teacher, as such, cannot indulge in the degree of detachment which may conceivably characterize research scholars. The speculator may take years to formulate and perfect his system, meanwhile making his life choices on the basis of beliefs that are not the direct products of his own system. The critical philosopher often renders a great service by criticizing speculative systems and revealing their inadequacies. But he too, as he functions in his role as critic, can afford to suspend judgment. This the teacher cannot do. For the teacher has accepted responsibility for guiding the young. He must decide with his fellow citizens what is to be taught, in his day, about choices and actions and probable consequences.

The essentialists have rendered a great service by reminding teachers that exact, verified knowledge is to be preferred and respected.\* They suggest that the introduction of opinion in preference to knowledge is perverting the school and making it a propaganda agency. However, education must also have a moral responsibility—the responsibility to meet and grapple with the problems of societies and individuals, however complicated. The

aim of the good teacher should most certainly be to teach items of knowledge about the simple and exact. But as one charged with the task of guiding youth into maturity, he must also employ knowledge which is complex and inexact, his faith being that when choices must be made, a critically grounded hypothesis as a guide to action, even when not fully grounded in verified knowledge, is preferable to whim.

It must be granted that contemporary scholarship gives us relatively few independent, self-supporting statements about the good life. On the other hand, to the extent that the good life involves physical safety in a world of things, we do have a significant body of technological information. For example, to the extent that the good life involves freedom from disease, a certain body of dependable propositions about living the good life comes from the science of medicine. Perhaps psychology has something to tell us about mental health. Aside from prejudice, personal predispositions, perhaps sociology and economics render certain dependable generalizations about how things ought to be done in our day. Also it may well be, as some of the essentialists remind us, that in history and the humanities we have certain tested insights into how men may meet those ever-present human problems of pain, betrayal, and frustration. Perhaps some features of the good life have become simplified, exact knowledge, so that some tested propositions are available which are good as well as true. The pragmatists in their relativism may not always have remembered this. However, it is highly questionable whether education can be reduced to technology; we are forced to make moral choices as we plan educational practices. A completed science of good living is not yet available. To make simplicity and degree of exactness of knowledge the sole criteria for selection of school subject matter is unsound, because there is no direct and necessary relationship between the needs of human beings in contemporary societies and the progress of scholarship in areas of need.

### *Essentialism and the literary humanistic tradition*

It is interesting to notice that two outstanding essentialists, Breed and Kandel, have expressed sympathy toward the systematic development of educational doctrines based on Platonic-Aristotelian-Thomistic traditionalism.<sup>16</sup> Is there a possibility that essentialism fully aware of itself will adopt some form of literary humanism? When Dr. Kandel suggests that the real conflict between the essentialists and progressives is one between idealism in one form or another and pragmatism,<sup>17</sup> he suggests a traditional philosophical position as a base for essentialism. Again when in *The Cult of Uncertainty*<sup>18</sup> he draws systematically on the doctrines of the Anglo-Catholic traditionalists, a strong, positive philosophical basis is laid for a type of essentialist practice, but grounded in a consistent value orientation.

### *Summary*

The notion that the primary job of schools is that of teaching the basic skills was forwarded directly and indirectly by various social, cultural, and ideological developments in nineteenth century America. These were enumerated as follows: 1) Jacksonian democracy, in its fierce equalitarianism, assumed that schooling had nothing to do with the moral being of man; 2) evangelical Christianity, expressed in the emotional excesses of the camp meetings and revivals, taught that man was informed by the Divine through mystical revelation, this having little or nothing to do with formal education; 3) the rivalries among the Protestant sects were so intense that it was safer for schools to shy away from moral teachings and concentrate on imparting skills and information of a restricted sort; 4) rote, verbatim mastery of textual materials to be re-cited by pupils and heard for accuracy by teachers was a procedure lending itself to easier decisions about passing or failing demanded by the graded school; 5) certain

<sup>16</sup> See Breed, "Education and the Realistic Outlook," pp. 122-24. Cf. also I. L. Kandel, *The Cult of Uncertainty* (New York: Macmillan, 1943).

<sup>17</sup> I. L. Kandel, "Prejudice the Garden toward Roses?" *American Scholar*, January, 1939, pp. 72-82.

<sup>18</sup> (New York: Macmillan, 1943).

philosophical ideas held by nineteenth century intellectuals made objective, impartial, neutral knowledge a scholarly ideal and suggested its role as an educational standard.

The point of view known as *essentialism*, which for a time was much discussed in American education, placed great emphasis upon the basic skills. F. S. Breed, I. L. Kandel, W. C. Bagley, and W. W. Brickman are educators who, at one time or another, have called themselves essentialists. Essentialism stresses the importance of impartiality in educational work in the name of the values of scholarly objectivity. F. S. Breed, a leading essentialist, took the position that only what is known with certainty is to be taught. All essentialists agreed that mastery of verified knowledge is a major educational objective.

A form of essentialism which would limit the school to an emphasis upon mastery of skills and information is held to be untenable for the following reasons: 1) contemporary scholarship, especially in the human-social sciences but also in the exact sciences and certainly in the humanities, stresses the importance of a scholar's bias or point of view in his work—thought is inherently contextual; 2) growth and maturation of the young and social change will not wait for scholarship to achieve objective knowledge; to refrain from teaching in areas where there remains scholarly uncertainty is to fail to meet the needs of human beings in our society.

The essentialist movement rendered a great service in American education by insisting on the importance of scholarship and by raising strong objection to a carelessness and sentimentality that were evident from time to time in schools. Nevertheless, essentialism is not a tenable philosophy of education. The sympathy which Professor Kandel and Professor Breed have indicated toward traditional idealistic or realistic philosophies in their educational implications may suggest that an essentialist position, fully developed, is likely to become a form of traditionalism.

### Notes

- p. 42 "Impartiality and objectivity are positive values . . ."  
Theodore Brameld, in *Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Dryden, 1955), develops the argument that what he calls *essentialism* in education is a product of a

theory of knowledge which is grounded in the seventeenth century philosophy of Descartes; that is, that a separation is made between the knower and the object known. See John Wild, "The Cartesian Deformation of the Structure of Change and its Influence on Modern Thought," *Philosophical Review*, L (January, 1941), pp. 35-36. Many so-called epistemological problems in philosophy arise from the original assumption that the knower and the object of knowledge can be separated. It has been suggested that many of these are false problems because the original assumption is invalid.

- p. 43 "*... there is an objective world . . . independent of mind.*"

The conception that the object known is independent of the knower appears to be close to "common sense." But whence comes the common sense of a culture? Is it possible that what we consider to be common sense is, after all, a product of enculturation, i.e., of the informal educative influences of the culture? Could it be, then, that the cultural influences of the nineteenth century American frontier, as discussed in this chapter, are expressions of the Cartesian dualism carried over in evangelical Protestantism? Or again, is nineteenth century frontier culture in the United States really a product of the frontier, or is it partly an expression of a way of dealing with land, water, Indians, horses, guns, and holsters, grounded in Cartesian, Western European, Protestant, evangelical habits of thought?

- p. 44 "*... 'facts' relate to the purposes of scholars and to the contexts in which problems arise.*"

The point is that only if the object known is independent of the knower can knowledge be seen as morally neutral. If to know is also to experience something, to live with it, to taste, smell, and feel it, to reshape and modify it, then knowing always carries with it a value-dimension.

- p. 46 "*The essentialists have rendered a great service . . .*"

The ideals of neutrality and objectivity in education must not be discarded in favor of a conception that one foolish notion is as worthy as the next. Although perfect neutrality and



objectivity are impossible, a complete subjectivity *is*, of course, intellectual anarchy. Some historians of philosophy consider that David Hume's skepticism is a thoroughly logical development, given the dualistic assumptions of Descartes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Typical World views that Influence Educational Policy

EARLY DECADES of the twentieth century expressed a spirit of optimism in American society. The First World War was, indeed, a tremendous ordeal involving much human suffering. Upon its conclusion, however, people believed that it had been the war to end wars, the war to make the world safe for continued progress to be implemented through education. But the Great Depression following the excesses of the "roaring 'twenties" signalled the beginning of a ground swell of re-examination of the assumptions of liberalism in politics, education, and religion.\* The years since 1929 have seen the economic, political, and intellectual stresses of a world-wide economic depression, the rise of fascist and communist collectivism, the Second World War, and its horrible Korean sequel, with a continuing cold war dividing the peoples of the earth.

There are those alive today who remember when people thought the last war had been fought and an era of universal peace was at hand. Some remember a time when social scientists assumed that uniform and steady growth of democratic freedom and equality was to continue indefinitely. These, along with other precious hopes, were shattered by events

of the fourth, fifth, and sixth decades of the twentieth century. A few years before his death in 1952 John Dewey remarked:

Not even the most far-seeing of men could have predicted, no longer ago than fifty years, the course events have taken. The expectations that were entertained by men of generous outlook are in fact chiefly notable in that the actual course of events has moved, and with violence, in the opposite direction. . . .

Instead of universal peace, there are two wars, world wide in extent and destructive beyond anything known in all history. Instead of uniform and steady growth of democratic freedom and equality, we have the rise of powerful totalitarian states with thorough-going suppression of liberty of belief and expression, outdoing the most despotic states of previous history.<sup>1</sup>

Thinking men have responded to these shocks and disappointments by entering into systematic review of our traditions and values. There is the unmistakable sense that something has gone wrong somewhere. Since we rely so heavily upon the schools to perpetuate the values to which we hold, it is understandable that education has come in for its share of critical examination. The competence of professional educators is being called into question. Because of the troubles in the world, we hear the charge that those who have led in the schools have led into wrong paths.

It is not strange that the intellectuals as well as the men on the street have blamed schools and school teachers for their disappointment, for we pay for the schools. We send our children to the schools to make them good children. The job of the schools, we think, is to conserve and extend the good and true and beautiful things of life.\* Now, for more than a quarter of a century, we have been having trouble—bad trouble—and during this quarter century there has been a swelling chorus of criticism of the public schools. In view of what was happening in the world at large, this is not surprising. Parents, teachers, scientists, politicians, and intellectuals have been struggling to make up their

<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, "The Democratic Faith and Education," in *The Authoritarian Attempt to Capture Education*, ed. Conference on the Scientific Spirit and the Democratic Faith (New York: King's Crown, 1915), pp. 1-2.

minds as to how to educate children and youth for the tragic, confused world of the mid-twentieth century. As they engage in in this important enterprise, they are pushed back to consider some of the fundamental problems of existence—questions having to do with the meaning of life, the nature and destiny of man, a conception of the universe in which men spend their days, and the natural abode which forms their habitat.\* It is not so much that the ancient questions are obsolete. It is the habits of answering them which must be reconsidered.

## PHILOSOPHIC BASIS OF EDUCATIONAL THEORY

### *Theory of the universe*

A world-view involves a theory of the universe. By the universe, we mean totality—everything—all that there is, the over-all matrix of life and existence. Stars, suns and moons, trees and butterflies, rain and sunshine, people. Houses, streets, wars, vacations, disease, suffering and horror, happiness and fun. Let us recall that we, too, are inside, so that our view of the whole is from our perspective—from the place in space and time that we occupy. Many moderns find little meaning in totality; others find purpose in it. There are love affairs, murders, laughter of children, tuberculosis, rainbows and sunsets, tornadoes that destroy lives and homes, deeds of mercy and heroism, and the tortures of wartime prison camps. Every child in school makes his way, for a time, within this totality. His education may well make explicit this child's limited location within the universe, and thus be particular, but it cannot have direction and meaning unless it is related to a larger context. In the long history of philosophy, at least three major types of answers have been given as men have attempted to formulate a theory of the universe.

*Cosmic drama—a monistic universe.* Some are deeply convinced that the universe makes sense. They see in it a great master pattern or system.\* Everything that happens, from a great world

war to the falling of a leaf in autumn, has a part in this scheme. It is like a drama unfolding; it has plot and purpose and motivation. This is in many ways a comforting view, but it has frequently been said that the person who thinks like this is deluding himself, is a bit dull, or simply has not lived. There are many disappointments and frustrations in life, and there are many big overwhelming events that are destructive and frightening. How about poverty, cruelty, and the atomic bomb? How can a clear-headed, rational human being look at everything within his ken and affirm that "it all makes sense?"

*A philosophy of conflict—dualism.* A second way of thinking about the universe explains the apparent opposition between the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, and the encouraging and the discouraging as expressing two fundamentally different and opposing forces or systems. There is some cosmic hope in this view, but it is not so comforting as the first one, for it says that you must always be on your guard. You must grit your teeth, clench your fists, and roll up your sleeves. With hard work, constant wariness, and self-control, it may be possible to live on the side of goodness and beauty. But goodness and beauty do not necessarily always win out. There are two basic principles, systems, or forces. One is intelligible and congenial to man; the other is frequently unintelligible and fundamentally opposed to man and his welfare. Man's only hope is to struggle always to remain on the right side, and even then he may take one mis-step and lose.

*An open-ended world—pluralism.* A third conception, while having a long history in Western thought, has been in vogue particularly during the past half-century. From time to time, it appeared in earlier centuries, but it has been more popular recently because some have thought that it squares better with a scientific, experimental way of viewing our surroundings. Actually, the term *universe* and the concept of a *world-view* are suspect in this conception, for the term *universe* implies that

there is a totality which can be considered and thought about. Recent thinkers have suggested that this is silly. Nobody knows how big the world is. Anyway it keeps growing and changing. One cannot react intelligently to the question, "How are things?" Which things? When and where? What this amounts to is the positive assertion that one over-all system or system of systems is inconceivable.\* We can sometimes make a bit of sense of a little part of our world, but there is no over-all pattern which can be conceived. People who look for some over-all pattern are victims of superstitious outlooks carried over from pre-scientific ages. It is time-wasting and futile to try to understand "it all." The best one can do is to try to understand and exert control of the part that comes one's way in his brief lifetime.

### *Theory of man*

A philosophy of education expresses not only a theory of the universe or of totality; it reflects more specifically a theory of man. Now first of all, men are within or inside the universe; therefore, a theory of man will be related to a theory of the universe since man theorizing is a part of the universe theorized about. While many theories of man would claim that man has special place in totality, the statement of a theory of man does not necessarily presuppose this. If sparrows were philosophizing, conceivably they might make theory of sparrow a special subdivision. If cows were doing it, they would probably formulate a theory of cow, cockroaches a theory of cockroach, etc. We are especially preoccupied with our own kind; we are under special pressure somehow to get along with them. Familiar adages express theories of human nature. "Love makes the world go 'round." "Spare the rod and spoil the child." "The Devil hath work for idle hands." What motivates people? Why do people work? What do people want from life?

*Idealism—man as mind.* One theory of human nature which is very old is that the most real part of a human being is his mind

or spirit. This is a part of him, so it goes, that does not show. It is the part of him that dreams dreams and receives ideas. However, not even a physiologist or a radiologist, for that matter, can locate the mysterious something that makes man what he is in essence. This mental part of a person is considered to be the most precious and important part of him. It is the part of him which, most of all, needs to be cultivated. The person's body, on the other hand, is of importance only as it is instrumental to mind. It is simply the container for the things of primary value; it is not to be given attention for its own sake. Of course, holes may be mended from time to time to keep the container serviceable, but it is not particularly important, except as it acts as the carrier for the real person. In fact, some theories of evil have defined evil as treating the body as an end instead of as a means. Such a view explains peculiar customs such as those of the flagellite cults, members of which whipped themselves in order to subdue the evil body. More moderate views have stressed slogans such as "a sound mind in a sound body," the belief being that the mind, soul, or spirit could thrive better if the body were strong and healthy. However, even in this latter view the body is not good for anything in and of itself. It is cultivated because of the worth of what it contains.

*Naturalism—man as an organism.* A contrasting theory of human nature is that man is fundamentally a biological organism, like other living things. It is granted that man is physiologically more complex than many other animals. It is also granted that man lives in a highly organized society, even more complicated than those of the bees and ants. It stresses the biological and social aspects of living as of primary importance, and says that man's destiny is to recognize and accept his fundamental animality. Let us thus see ourselves, and devote ourselves to improving our biological and social lot. It sees what has been called "mind" as a product of biological and social evolution. It would grant the possibility that some other animal some day might invent a language system and, through that, develop a highly compli-

cated society such as our own. It finds the basic and final meanings of life in the biological and social conditions of twentieth century existence.

### *Theory of nature*

The main features of a world view are probably set in the theory of the universe and of human nature. That is, one's attitudes toward non-human nature and man's works in his natural context will probably flow from one's attitudes toward the world in general and toward man. There are the idealizers of nature. They extoll the beauty of the seasons, the simplicity and harmony of animal and plant life, and the order which they think they find in the course of events in the physical world. Then there is the view that nature is relentless and fearsome. Natural man is looked upon as a fierce and greedy beast, like the other beasts. "Nature is red in tooth and claw." Man can only live with himself and with others as he is disciplined to be "cultured" or "civilized," not natural. To have developed ways of behaving which are sharply distinguished from those of animals is to be cultured or civilized.

Words like *prudery*, *puritanism*, and *Victorianism* have been used to denote an attitude involving the denial of man's animality—his relationship to nature. More characteristic of modern man is, perhaps, the attitude of casual acceptance and appreciation of nature around us and within ourselves—the recognition that nature, in and of itself, can be good or bad, constructive or destructive, but that it must be taken on its own terms, controlled, managed, appreciated, and understood.

### LIVE OPTIONS

Each of the options suggested has a representation in the cultural heritage of Western civilization. Each remains alive in the habits of thought of American people. Historically then, each represents a possible authentic emphasis in American education. These



are notions American people have had and have argued about. They are present in the culture. Difficulties arise, however, as an effort is made to clarify educational policy by a reference to one or another traditional or typical world view as somehow representative of what the people believe, for the various views are not consistent one with another. At the same time, each has a right to be heard.

In the light of the conflicting philosophical voices claiming to speak for public education in his day, John Dewey identified two major positions:

I see but two alternatives between which education must choose if it is not to drift aimlessly. One of them is expressed by the attempt to induce educators to return to the intellectual methods and ideals that arose centuries before the scientific method was developed. The appeal may be temporarily successful in a period when general insecurity, emotional and intellectual as well as economic, is rife. For under these conditions the desire to lean on fixed authority is active. Nevertheless, it is so out of touch with all the conditions of modern life that I believe it is folly to seek salvation in this direction. The other alternative is systematic utilization of scientific method as the pattern and ideal of intelligent exploration and exploitation of the potentialities inherent in experience.<sup>2</sup>

### *The humanistic tradition*

In the preceding quotation, Dewey designates one option as that centering in "the intellectual methods and ideals that arose centuries before the scientific method was developed." Close to the root of the public school controversy is the controversy of science and a philosophy based upon science, in opposition to the literary humanistic tradition and a philosophy based thereon. The thinking of the professional educators tends to be based upon science. Much of the current criticism of the public schools has come as people have seen that a scientific, experimental approach to education de-emphasizes, leaves out, or sometimes clashes outright with a poetic, dramatic, imaginative approach to education based on tradition and religion.

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 108.

Recently, scholars of myth, poetry, and religion have become aware of the degree to which the scientific movement in educational theory and practice has de-emphasized the literary humanistic studies. Aware of the power that formal education has, they sound alarms to call the attention of people to contradictions between the educational theory and practice of the schools and the values embodied in the humanistic tradition in scholarship. We take the position here that the two major poles of this controversy are: (1) science and a philosophy and practice of education based on science, and (2) literature, poetry, art, religion, and a philosophy and practice of education based more upon these than upon scientific sources. Those who adopt the second position, while they differ rather widely in the details of their educational proposals, are in solid agreement in making the following judgments:

1) that the naturalistic, pragmatic, scientific philosophy and practice of education which dominate the schools are inadequate;

2) that guiding values and standards coming from sources other than naturalistic philosophy and pragmatic theories are needed in the schools;

3) that the needed values and standards are to be found in the Greek, Hebrew, and Christian traditions of the Western World.

Just what are these traditions? What is the tradition of humanistic scholarship to which they say we should return? What are the major tenets of the Graeco-Roman, Hebrew-Christian heritage to which they would have us turn for guidance in education?

In terms of the over-view of philosophic orientations presented in foregoing pages of this chapter, the literary humanistic outlook appears to support the world-view of cosmic drama. There is the persisting search for meaning in all of existence. There is the reluctance to accept a world in which human ideals and purposes are not given pre-eminent and central status. The literary humanistic tradition apparently supports some sort of idealistic conception of human nature. It is the view that mind is the

unique and precious part of man, which deserves most of all to be cultivated in school work. This traditional humanism has beauty, dignity, and poetry; certainly there is aesthetic appeal here. If this is the true philosophy, perhaps teachers need to work to break the domination of public education by the pragmatists and educational scientists. Perhaps they should enter into a great crusade to return public education to the literary humanistic tradition from which originally, it is claimed, it arose.

### *Scientific naturalism*

Dewey suggests that the other alternative is "... systematic utilization of scientific method as the pattern and ideal ...". As a matter of fact, the enterprise of deliberate, formal, institutionalized education in this country has become a special science and subject matter since 1900. Education as a field of study emerged in the same chronological epoch as psychology—the scientific study of human behavior, sociology—the scientific study of social organization, and pragmatic philosophy—the expression of the influence of science upon philosophy itself. The point of view which has most influenced the public schools in the past half century has come out of the background of scientific thought in the wake of nineteenth century Darwinian evolutionary theories.

The early scientific philosophies in the wake of Darwin took various forms. For a time, the works of Herbert Spencer were widely read in the United States. A politically conservative social Darwinism arose, which emphasized the relationship between survival of the fittest and laissez-faire economic competition. Mechanistic, thoroughly materialistic philosophies such as that expressed by Bertrand Russell in the famous "A Free Man's Worship" were propounded. Likewise, the earlier work in the scientific study of education was socially conservative and, as to methodology, strongly influenced by mathematical-physical models. The testing movement in education was probably an expres-

sion of this tendency. Thorndike's psychology, with its emphasis on "connections," suggests the structure of a machine. Other leaders in the study of education were more influenced by scientific biology than by physics. Thus, for them, the scientific study of education was the study of types, life histories, growth, and individual differences.

Either way, it must be recognized that during the past half-century and more, many competent men have devoted their lives to the application of scientific theory and practice, in some form, to formal educational work. Their efforts have taken hold, especially in the public elementary and secondary schools, so that the theoretical foundations, curricula, teaching methods, and measurement and evaluation have ostensibly been scientifically grounded.

Clearly, the scientific method has proved itself beyond significant doubt as a means for dealing with physical objects, and important contributions to solutions of human problems have been made. Yet, in an era when unsolved human-social problems have erupted in world war upon world war, concrete evidence to demonstrate the success of the method of science applied to man and his works is less than convincing. Now, for the past 15 or 20 years, there has been growing dissatisfaction with the educational product of the science-of-education movement. Has the so-called "progressive," "modern," or "scientific" education, after all, been a kind of aberration imposed by educationists upon American people? Should the public schools reject science as a basis for their conceptions of purpose, and return to some traditional theory?

### THE CRUX OF THE CONTROVERSY

Parents of children in the public schools are divided in their loyalties and frequently confused, since all of us nowadays have been nurtured by both the educational science of the schools

and the continuing influence of tradition. To overcome their increasing concern, however, a complete compromise is impossible. The naturalistic, scientific theory and practice of professional education which developed in the present century clashes to some degree with the traditional educational assumptions. The philosophic bases of literary humanism and the science-of-education movement are fundamentally different, and while educational science has carried the day in the schools, the educative influence of home and legend tend to rest on folklore, myth, literature, and religion rather than upon scientific sources.

Despite the apparent success of the scientific method as applied to the world of things, people find it frightening to entertain what appear to be the philosophic presuppositions of philosophic naturalism. That our world and all things in it are the product of evolution, that man is a biological organism in a complicated society in which he learns to be "human," that change and flux characterize not only the realm of physical things but also the realm of ideals, purposes, and principles is hard for men to accept. Yet it appears that such a world-view is that implied by, or at least most readily squared with the thorough-going application of scientific method to all areas of human concern.

### Notes

- p. 52 "... re-examination of the assumptions of liberalism in politics, education, and religion."

The passing of the so-called liberalism of the years between the wars, expressed in the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, and the growing popularity since World War II of various forms of conservatism have been themes in much recent literature of social criticism. For examples, see Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944, 1955); George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949); Charles Frankel, *The Case for Modern Man* (New York: Harper, 1956); William H. Whyte, *The Organization*

*Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); David Riesman, Ruell Denney, and Nathan Glazer, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950). See also various books and articles by Peter Viereck, Russell Kirk, and Clinton Rossiter.

- p. 53 *"The job of the schools . . . is to conserve and extend the good and true and beautiful things of life."*

We argue, then, that neutrality, strictly speaking, is impossible in educational work, for there are alternative images; but complete aimlessness is the only alternative if there is no image. What goes on in schools only makes sense in the light of some sort of image of the educated man.

- p. 54 *"... they are pushed back to consider some of the fundamental problems of existence . . ."*

Important technical, philosophical considerations are involved in the assertion that philosophy of education is grounded in a world-view. Modern thought has tended to move away from the conception of philosophy and educational theory as involving a world view. Positivists and some pragmatists in philosophy have insisted that when moral (hence educational) questions are involved, a world-view is irrelevant. They claim that the methods of thinking (of inquiry) can be the objects of concern, with no further implications about the nature of reality. The position developed in this book, and specifically in this chapter, is that some sort of world view or world-model is inescapably involved in all educational theorizing. The argument thus would be that positivistic and pragmatic educational theories are to be understood as coming out of an initial conception of an open, evolving, plural universe.

- p. 54 *"They see in it a great master pattern or system."*

A certain tendency of religious philosophers to argue that all idealistic, transcendental, and classical philosophies are *ipso facto* religious can be observed in contemporary literature of social and educational criticism. Certainly, the history of Western thought can be taken to demonstrate that a dichoto-

mous classification of "images of man" or "world views" into sacred and secular types is unsound. However, against those who might argue that educational ideals have no necessary relationship to an outlook upon man and his destiny in the universe, it is here argued that some sort of world view is presupposed in any efforts at deliberate education.

- p. 56 " . . . the positive assertion that one over-all system or system of systems is inconceivable."

In one sense, a pluralistic outlook is a negative one. It is the world view that no over-all world view is possible. But the negation is not an empty one. The negation provides the positive conception that our world furnishes fluid, dynamic, changing contexts in which the lives of men are lived; and the emphasis upon the methods of experimentation and analysis is supported in part by this conception.



New

American

Educational

Ideals—

Science &

Democracy



## CHAPTER FIVE

# The Impact of Science upon Educational Theory

HISTORICALLY, science made its first impact in material and technological fields. In astronomy and geology, men came to view the physical world as the product not of creative fiat but of long ages of gradual growth and development, in which chance had played a great part. Relativity physics, the discovery of the "human equation" in physical measurements, evidence that matter and energy cannot be clearly separated, and—in biology—evidence that plant and animal forms cannot be clearly differentiated shook the former confidence of men in an ordered universe operating according to some fixed design. Even while physics, chemistry, botany, and zoology developed autonomy as separate "subjects" in school and college curricula, research and theory in these fields increasingly demonstrated the difficulty in discovering in the nature of things the essential differences between physical, chemical, botanical, and zoological change.

The latter nineteenth century saw tremendous strides in hybridization and plant and animal husbandry. Medicine became an experimental, laboratory science in the early years of the twentieth century. An experimental approach to the human and social fields

began after 1900 as psychology, sociology, political science, economics, and education became independent fields of scholarly specialization.

At the turn of the century, through the epoch-making influence of thinkers like William James and G. Stanley Hall, naturalistic, experimental psychology had its beginnings. In social studies and history, the work of scholars like Carl Becker, James Harvey Robinson, and Charles Beard reflected the influence of science, naturalism, and evolutionary theory. In fact, the naturalistic, experimental, scientific outlook gained more and more headway in all areas of American intellectual life.\* It would thus be surprising indeed if theory and practice of public education were not to show the influence of such trends.

Changes in educational thought in the twentieth century are not to be thought of as involving some sort of deliberately engineered ideological revolution. To be sure, a few leading educational theorists—G. Stanley Hall, William James, John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, R. Bruce Raup, John L. Childs, Boyd H. Bode, and H. Gordon Hullfish—worked quite deliberately and self-consciously to spell out the implications for education of an evolutionary, naturalistic, experimental, scientific philosophy. But it might be argued that these thinkers were as much trying to *explain* a cultural shift as to create one. Evolution, science, and naturalistic philosophy were "in the air." The point is that public education—sensitive to cultural change—has been very greatly influenced by scientific-technological-material interests, so much so that the public school has for many years now been moving away from the Great Tradition and toward a practice more largely based upon science, technology, and the values of science and technology.

### RISE OF A SCIENCE OF MAN

Those who gave their major professional attention to the direct study of education as a human enterprise were, understandably,

impressed by the apparent success of experimental scientific methods in the study of man himself. Scientists applying their intellectual methods to the study of man apparently provided evidence that disposition, temperament, intelligence were directly influenced by body chemistry. Experimentalists in anatomy and physiology found many direct similarities among the mechanisms of plant, animal, and human bodies.

Thus, psychology, literally the "science of the soul," came to be based upon chemical, anatomical, and physiological investigations of human behavior.\* Men, like the animals and plants, work to secure food, maintain optimal temperature conditions, reproduce, grow, and persist in living. These "needs" or "drives" are as much the bases of motivation for men as for other living organisms.

But men, obviously, are not butterflies or dandelions, and certainly the complexities of human behavior cannot be reduced to the level of lower organisms. This was granted. How, then, do we explain the enormous differences? The various sciences applied to the study of man joined to provide answers to the query. Men have learned to stand and walk upright; thus, the arms have been freed. The thumb-forefinger opposition makes it possible for them to use tools, and the mouth has been freed from the carrying and grasping tasks which it serves in other similarly constructed animals. There is a loose lip and tongue structure with a highly developed musculature. This mouth and tongue structure, coupled with a highly adaptable vocal structure, provides conditions necessary for the development of language. There is a large brain and a centralized nervous system. The life-span is long enough to make a long period of learning possible.

However, the physiological uniqueness of man is not a sufficient explanation of civilization and learning. Here a sociological theory developed primarily by George H. Mead<sup>1</sup> is drawn

<sup>1</sup> George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934). See also A. S. Clayton, *Emergent Mind and Education* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1943).

upon. Language emerged at the human level; it was an emergent, not an inborn capacity or a preordained gift of some great prime mover. A mystery—yes. Perhaps even a miracle. But no more so than the emergence in time of mountains and valleys, and of the endless varieties of living things on earth. With the emergence of language, what traditional philosophers had called “mind” appears. For intellectual activity is still activity—behavior. To do something by means of language is still to do something. “Mind” is symbolic behavior. “Mind” is not a substance; it is a way of behaving; it is acting through symbols. “Mind” is “mind-ing”—this way, it is a verb, not a noun.

These, then, were some of the leading conceptions at work in the American intellectual community in the early years of the present century. Probably they can be questioned, refuted at specific points, and perhaps rejected *in toto*. The point is, however, that men of ability, integrity, and conscience were impressed by this way of viewing the human quest. Philosophy, psychology, sociology, political theory, and even law<sup>2</sup> and history<sup>3</sup> felt the impact of this reconstruction of a world-view and a theory of human nature and behavior. So also did education. Educationists were not a breed apart; they were men of their age, influenced by the ideas that were at work in their day.

### AN EVOLUTIONARY NATURALISTIC WORLD VIEW

The naturalistic, empirical, pragmatic philosophy of education which has been most influential in American public school work for the past half-century or more is based upon science and evolution as conceived by nineteenth and early twentieth century American scholars, all of whom were profoundly influenced by Darwin and Darwinian ideas.\* The fundamental assumptions of this naturalistic, pragmatic philosophy of education should be stated here.

<sup>2</sup> The legal theory of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., is the classic example.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *infra*. Clearly the “New History” was grounded in pragmatic theory.

*Theory of the universe*

Change is the basic characteristic of our world. The physical universe, the geography of the earth, and biological forms exhibit a long history of change and development. Hypotheses supporting this view have been established by scientific inquiry, only to pave the way for further discoveries in the light of which specific theories are refined and modified. There is no clear evidence at any point that an over-all design or pattern governs changes in our world. In any case, analysis and control of the changes, rather than formulation of over-all theories of origin and design, is the central task. Naturalists, characteristically, are not particularly interested in speculation about first causes. They are too busy working to understand specific instances of change in specific areas.

*Theory of man*

Man himself has evolved from lower biological organisms. His fundamental drives he shares with other living creatures. His guiding moral values are constructed, not absolutely established in the nature of things. Truth, goodness, and beauty are culturally defined. The rules which he observes in living with his fellow men are rules that have evolved through social processes; there is nothing absolute about them. Man's social life is much more complicated than that of most other living things, because of man's proficiency in using language. However, it too is looked upon as a product of evolution. Mind comes to be spoken of as a "bio-social emergent." What has been called mind is not really a substantive part of a person but is, rather, man's symbolic behavior (i.e., acting with or by means of symbols).

*Theory of nature*

Nature is the all-inclusive category. Man and his universe are natural. There is nothing over and above the realm of the natu-

ral. Man is an organism struggling to satisfy his needs and perpetuate himself in a natural world. The methods which appear to have been most successful in conserving life and contributing to the satisfaction of man's basic drives are those which we call scientific or empirical. Thus while there is no eternal truth, the scientific method, sometimes called the critical method or the method of intelligence, is the best way to get the best possible answers to all sorts of questions.

The leading principles of an educational practice in accord with the findings and attitude of modern science are to be located in the educational theory of evolutionary naturalism. The key concept for education in this view is that of education as *growth*. Thus the aim of educational activity is to direct the present experience of the young so that its activities and results become instruments of control over future experiences. To achieve power to control future experience is to grow. The aim of education, then, is to foster growth. Education, as it is truly education, is growth.

### THE NEW LOGIC

We have seen that evolutionary naturalism involved new conceptions of human nature, learning, and truth. Scientific movements of the later nineteenth century centered around the idea of biological evolution as developed by people like Darwin and Huxley.<sup>4</sup> Gradually an evolutionary point of view, with its emphasis upon change and continuous development, permeated all fields of scholarship.

#### *Prime mover rejected*

In the most fundamental and technical sense, the idea of evolution was of greatest importance as it gave rise to a new concep-

<sup>4</sup> John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940), p. 458.

tion of the very nature of thought and inquiry. Older formulations of the method of intellectual work had, in one way or another, finally assumed the underlying presence of an eternal, unchanging structure in the world. The Aristotelian conception of change which had persisted for centuries in the minds of Western men, although it involved ideas such as *development* and *potentiality*, had not allowed for genuine novelty. The Aristotelian view was that the process in which anything is involved is, after all, only a specific instance of the eternal forms.<sup>5</sup> When terms like "development" or "evolution" were used by pre-Darwinian thinkers they did not mean the origin of new forms or a mutation from an old species. Rather, change, growth, development, and evolution were thought of as the traversing of a previously plotted cycle—as having been somehow planned before.<sup>6</sup>

When the modern conception of evolution was introduced, on the other hand, the idea of the underlying presence of a structural design and of a prior intelligence and prime mover working in and through it was called into question and discarded. Organic adaptations were attributed to constant variations, with elimination of the less fit variations in the struggle for survival. There seemed to be no need for postulating a prime mover as an eternal planner or designer.<sup>7</sup>

This was thought to be the case, not only in non-human nature but also in situations involving human beings. The center of human behavior was no longer considered to be in the relation between God and man. As in nature new forms emerge and new mutants spring from old species, so in the life of man new and unforeseen modes of behavior emerge. Man and his enterprises are placed in a natural environment, and they, like any other natural phenomena, are considered to have a natural origin and

<sup>5</sup> John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Holt, 1920), p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> John Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (New York: Holt, 1910), pp. 11-12.

a natural setting. Thus, the fundamental importance of evolutionary thought lay in its implications for intellectual method.

It has now grown clear that the fundamental importance of evolutionary thought, like that of . . . earlier naturalisms, lay primarily in its methodological significance: there was to be no sharp difference in intellectual methods in treating man and the other aspects of the Nature of which he was taken to be a part.<sup>8</sup>

This point of view accepts novelty as a constant feature of the world—novelty in the very forms or species of occurrences as well as in details of specific processes. Man and his experiences are seen as parts of nature. The gulf between the "nature" studied by chemists, physicists, and biologists, and the "nature" studied by sociologists, psychologists, and educationists is closed.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Positive characteristics of the new logic*

In his essay, "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy," in the volume entitled *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, John Dewey points out three positive characteristics of the new logic arising out of evolutionary naturalism. The first is that inquiry comes to be directed to how special changes serve and defeat our purposes rather than to the discovery and statement of some ultimate meaning or eternal essence back of the special changes. In the second place, the concern of inquiry comes to be with the present use and meaning of experience, its qualities and values being taken as they come. The attempt to justify wholesale certain qualities and values of existence and to disparage others is given up. In the third place, such a conception of inquiry injects responsibility into life. We are seen as having a real part in determining the future, in that our actions are viewed as having power in indeterminate situations. We can actually have a part in creating the future—in making our own good world. We

<sup>8</sup> John Herman Randall, Jr., "The Nature of Naturalism," in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, ed. Y. H. Krikorian (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 357.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.



can to some degree affect the future development of situations in which we are involved.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, this effort to control or create a future comes to be looked upon as the central purpose of all thought. The function of inquiry is to control special changes so that our purposes are served rather than defeated, and it is to this end that the exercise of intelligence is supremely valuable. Morality, seen this way, is the exercise of intelligence in life situations. The good life is the life devoted to inquiry for the purpose of enhancing the values of future experience. It is to make future experiences more accessible to us, to make them enjoyable, and to make them valuable.

### 5 GROWTH THE CENTRAL EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT

When intelligent direction of present experiences to make specific changes serve our purposes is made the center of concern, a theory of education markedly different from classic theories is implied. Now the educational task is to foster in the young this ability to control and direct experience. Education is seen as an effort to control the future rather than as effort to understand and describe the past. In educative experiences we learn how to direct our present experiences so as to achieve control of future experiences. To be an educated person is to be in command of skills and knowledges to meet and master the new problems that come our way as we live our lives. The purpose of education, then, is to help us grow,<sup>11</sup> but inasmuch as we must grow in a world characterized by constant change, education devoted to the end of growth in this changing world must foster flexibility and adaptability.

Here, then, we have the philosophical foundation for a new education. In a changing world involving no absolutes, wherein

<sup>10</sup> Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, pp. 15 ff.

<sup>11</sup> See Sidney Hook, *John Dewey, an Intellectual Portrait* (New York: Day, 1939), p. 179.

man is looked upon as a natural emergent in a long evolutionary process, education is released from its bondage to tradition and social class. The philosophy was called *pragmatism* in the early years of the present century, and the educational practices which it seemed to support were called *progressive education*. The movement that has been termed progressive education is grounded in a naturalistic rather than a traditional idealistic, spiritualistic, or transcendental world view.

### INFLUENCE OF WILLIAM JAMES \*

Edward H. Reisner, one of the leading historians of American education, has fixed a specific date for the beginning of the modern scientific naturalistic movement in education. He says that the work *Principles of Psychology* by William James, published in 1890, was the first statement of a new viewpoint in psychology taking its fundamental concepts from Darwinian evolution. This work, according to Reisner, had great influence upon educators and psychologists in the United States. He suggests that by the turn of the century it had come to be very generally accepted by leaders in American educational work.<sup>12</sup> The term *pragmatism* and early twentieth century interpretations of the philosophy were associated with the name of William James, physician, psychologist, professor of philosophy at Harvard, and brother of Henry James, the novelist. Less well-known in their own day were Charles S. Peirce, George H. Mead, and John Dewey, members of the group of early twentieth century pioneers in pragmatic thinking.

#### *Doctrine of soul rejected*

James viewed the self as a stream of consciousness. A mysterious transcendental ego or Aristotelian soul was considered not necessary to explain human behavior. The part of oneself which

<sup>12</sup> Edward H. Reisner, *The Evolution of the Common School* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 487.

knows, and the part which "knows that it knows" are simply different aspects of one unity, argued James.<sup>12</sup> He maintained that the hypothesis of the soul was superfluous for psychology, and that human behavior could be explained by states of consciousness.<sup>14</sup> The eternal principles of logic or ethics about which philosophers of the past had spoken are simply the content, whatever it may have been, of the understanding. It is the thoughts that do the thinking. There is no substance or entity which may rightly be called *mind* or *soul*.

The states of consciousness are all that psychology needs to do her work with. Metaphysics or theology may prove the Soul to exist; but for psychology the hypothesis of such a substantial principle of unity is superfluous.<sup>15</sup>

### *Knowledge rooted in direct experience*

For James, all knowledge arises out of direct experiences of or acquaintanceship with things. The world of things outside the individual really exists. Things are interrelated and can be experienced, thus known by an individual. James called himself a pluralist. He referred to our world as an "open universe." What he consistently denied was that there was any over-all universal plan or scheme by application of which the whole could be understood. The world is a world of many things, many relationships, and many principles.<sup>16</sup>

These were important ideas, for they were in conflict with traditional philosophies. Traditional philosophies had taught that there was somehow a final end or over-all principle which included everything else and in terms of which everything else could be understood. Pluralism took the stand that there is no such over-all principle. The world is many things, and we must simply learn to live with it that way.

<sup>12</sup> William James, *Psychology* (New York: Holt, 1892, 1920, 1935), p. 176.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1909), pp. 221-23.

*How inquiry arises*

As an organism moves in this world, obstacles to on-going activity arise. Problems constituted by such blockings of activity stimulate inquiry, and the acts of inquiry, which are in the nature of problem-solving activities, are initiated. A problem is viewed as a blocking or inhibition of on-going activity; the criterion of whether or not a problem is solved is whether or not the sort of activity that was going on before the rise of the problem can be continued. The so-called "true" is to be found in the working of the hypotheses devised to release the inhibited or blocked activity. A hypothesis works when a process which has struck a snag can start working again and go on.<sup>17</sup>

The way a scientist tests a hypothesis is like the way in which an animal works to get out of danger by finding an escape and running away. He burrows around in the problem. He tries one thing, then another. A scientist seeks a way out of a problem, just as the animal is looking for a hole in the fence through which he can escape from the enclosure in which he is trapped.<sup>18</sup> He works for months on a complicated research problem. Then one day he hits upon a theory, acts upon it, and gets away or escapes from the difficulty which has held up his work. The test of his theory or hypothesis is, of course, crucial. If he "escapes from his difficulty" or "gets out of the hole he has been in," he pushes ahead into another phase of the work. If not, he starts burrowing again to find another clue.

## PRAGMATISM AS A RELATIVISTIC PHILOSOPHY

To be sure, critical and competent interpreters of pragmatism have never made it a justification for sheer anarchy or shallow expediency. Yet the biological context in which pragmatic thought and exposition moved at the beginning of the century was not

<sup>17</sup> George H. Mead, *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), p. 349.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

fully adequate to explain and justify social controls. A vulgarized educational and moral interpretation of pragmatism came to be that truth is whatever works; whatever produces desired results in a given context, regardless of further-reaching consequences. In the popular mind, pragmatism came to mean an individualistic relativism like that attributed to the Greek sophists by Socrates.<sup>19</sup>

James was understood to advocate a psychological, behavioristic pragmatism that sanctioned any solution of any problem which allowed activity to proceed. Whatever the individual found to resolve his difficulty appeared to be approvable. It was sometimes pointed out that James found it possible to encourage people to "will" their beliefs, whether or not the beliefs were critically formulated.<sup>20</sup> It appeared that he was willing to sanction superstition and humbug in religion so long as the religious experiences afforded were in some way satisfying to believers.<sup>21</sup> The implication seemed to be that one person's solution is as good as another's, and that individuals should be free to explore and invent—to discover or create beliefs that satisfy them as individuals, with little or no concern for the long-term social consequences.

The fight against absolutes in the early years of our century was frequently waged in the name of James. The influence of the more humanistic, emotionally toned pragmatism associated with James remains with us to some extent and continues to exert a degree of force in morals and education.

### PRAGMATISM'S INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

The impact of pragmatism can be seen in the social sciences as they developed in the first quarter-century after 1900. One of the most impressive examples was the so-called "New History" of

<sup>19</sup> See Plato, "Theaetetus," 152.

<sup>20</sup> William James, *The Will to Believe* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1917).

<sup>21</sup> James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1902).

scholars like James Harvey Robinson and Carl Becker. This was a move to relate historical scholarship to contemporary concerns and tensions. The view was that historical scholarship is an intellectual instrument for dealing with social problems. Probably, the shift from conventional systematic history to the social-problems approach, sometimes referred to as the social studies movement in the public schools, was inspired by the New History.

### *Irrelevance of traditional philosophy*

Carl Becker compares the twentieth century outlook with the thirteenth century world-view of St. Thomas Aquinas. The arguments of St. Thomas can neither be affirmed nor refuted by moderns, he asserts. They are simply irrelevant, for men can no longer think of existence as a divine drama having a meaning and purpose as the creation of some great master mind. To the contrary, modern men must regard the world as a continuous flux, as in constant change in all its phases.<sup>22</sup> History, as a record of past experience which may furnish principles for guiding present effort, does not render impartial directives. Men find what they wish to find in the past; they prove what they wish to prove. Although an actual series of events once occurred, we cannot get to the original, and consequently, we are forced to identify history with knowledge of history or what may be designated simply as "memory of things said and done."<sup>23</sup> The present includes a past and a future. History is a dynamic, moving function of a human being. It is a different record, depending on who is doing the writing, his culture, and his values.<sup>24</sup> Each age writes its own history. The history of one generation differs from that of another, because to different ages the past means different things.

<sup>22</sup> Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), pp. 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> Carl Becker, *Everyman His Own Historian* (New York: Crofts, 1935), p. 235.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242-43.

Every generation must understand the past in terms of its own needs, tensions, and issues. Every generation ". . . must inevitably play on the dead whatever tricks it finds necessary for its own peace of mind."<sup>25</sup>

### *Inevitability of bias in scholarship*

Like Becker, James Harvey Robinson disparaged the quest for objective history. All students of the past, he maintained, have to pick and choose, and their selections are governed by many unrecognized assumptions.<sup>26</sup> To justify one set of aims over another is scarcely possible, according to Robinson. There are many possible points of departure and as many end-points.<sup>27</sup> Thus, past experience can scarcely be a non-partisan guide to men in times of perplexity. For the history written is a function of the aims and purposes of the historians doing the writing, and one aim or purpose is about as defensible as the next. Continuing evolution of society and continuous reconstruction of the past by a moving present is assured. Each person who discusses human affairs has his peculiar frame of reference. Study of the points of view from which opinions proceed thus becomes a major task of scholars in the social fields.<sup>28</sup>

### *Priority of human interests*

Thus, since human interests are always prior to facts, it appears that records of past experience are relative to time, place, and the causes, interests, beliefs, and prejudices of those doing the recording. All social investigation may be seen as proceeding from immediate concerns of the present. A corollary to the "cash value" interpretation of pragmatism is provided. The new historians appear to say not only "Whatever works is right," but

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>26</sup> J. H. Robinson, *The Human Comedy* (New York: Harper, 1937), p. 380.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378.

<sup>28</sup> Charles A. Beard, *The Discussion of Human Affairs* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), pp. 123-24.

also, "One person's idea of what has worked is as good as the next." The new historians seem to be contending that the interests of the observer condition what he sees, so that interpretations of past experience are relative to time, place, and the causes, interests, and beliefs of those doing the recording. If human minds are bio-social products, the individual must think with the categories that his environment has given him. Thus he can scarcely transcend his place in time, space, and class to view the whole. He is a part of the process and he can only see the process from his vantage point.

### *What happens to truth?*

The sociologist Sorokin, severely critical of naturalism and its manifestations in intellectual life, has maintained that modern empirical scholarship in the social fields annuls the fundamental difference between truth and error. The "biases" of authors are studied, and outright contradictions—so Sorokin illustrates—are tolerated on the ground of the special values, interests, or origins of the writers.<sup>29</sup>

This harsh judgment must be tempered by the realization that the new social scientists, like the early pragmatists, were pioneers and protagonists. The scholars in these fields, like the teachers associated with the Progressive Education movement, were working against an ingrained and inbred absolutism. In the heat of controversy, they sometimes fought the absolutes with what appeared to be a rank individualism.<sup>30</sup> ✓

## INDIVIDUALISM AND RELATIVISM IN EARLY PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

The significant core of progressive education in its early twentieth century expressions, was its individualism. The value-con-

<sup>29</sup> P. M. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age* (New York: Dutton, 1941), pp. 119-20.

<sup>30</sup> See Carl Becker, *New Liberties for Old* (London: Milford, Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 148-50.



ceptions of the child-centered school arose out of significant movements in philosophy, social-scientific methodology, and social criticism, which in turn expressed a deep-moving change in the climate of opinion succeeding the "Victorian era" in the United States. If progressive education, characteristically, stressed individuality and freedom at the expense of organization and control, it was an application to education of frontier intellectual movements important in our century. The individualism and freedom of progressive schools may have been a consistent expression of pragmatic individualism and cultural relativism—points of view characterizing many phases of American scholarship in the first three or four decades of the present century. The "progressives" may have been spelling out in education, with considerable intellectual sophistication, the contemporary educational implications of movements in philosophy, psychology, and history.

Now, even within the Progressive Education Association, as we shall see later, there arose criticism of the extreme individualism touched upon above, particularly in the decade of the 'thirties. Nevertheless, the "child-centered school" kind of progressive education was at one time a very powerful educational theory. If the professional philosophers of education no longer defend the child-centered school, there are, nevertheless, many teachers and some outstanding educational leaders who hold to it.

### Notes

- p. 69 " . . . the naturalistic, experimental, scientific outlook gained more and more headway in all areas of American intellectual life."

It is entirely possible that the drive to make of education a science established *Education* as a college and university department. This seems to have been true not only of education, but also of sociology and psychology. Cattell in psychology, Thorndike and Dewey in education, and Sumner and Cooley in sociology were near contemporaries. These

and like-minded scholars of the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries were driven by the perhaps mistaken but, nevertheless, inspiring vision of an experimental science of man. The temper of the educational science of the early twentieth century is well expressed in E. L. Thorndike's widely quoted assertion that whatever exists exists in some quantity and therefore can be measured. Conversely, the implication appeared to be that whatever does not lend itself to measurement does not exist. See Edward L. Thorndike, "The Nature, Purposes, and General Methods of Measurement of Educational Products," in *The Measurement of Educational Products*, National Society for the Study of Education, Seventeenth Yearbook, Part II (Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Co., 1918), pp. 16-24.

- P. 70 *"Thus, psychology—literally the 'science of the soul'—came to be based upon chemical, anatomical, and physiological investigations of human behavior."*
- The techniques developed by the educational scientists have been widely applied and developed in the world of business. Vocabulary research has been applied in advertising. Industrial personnel departments have adapted educational testing and measuring devices for their purposes. "Brain-storming" is an adaptation of a pedagogical technique. If education of the future were to apply deliberately the devices of the advertisers and attitude changers, it might indeed be questioned whether an educational Frankenstein had not been created. Overtones of this suggestion are in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*.
- P. 71 *"The . . . philosophy of education which has been most influential in American public school work . . . is based upon science and evolution as conceived by nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars . . ."*
- Most of the literature used in teacher training is based on an ostensibly experimental scientific outlook. However, in the mid-twentieth century a widely read semi-popular work on pedagogy appeared which made no pretense at being scientific. It was Gilbert Highet's *The Art of Teaching* (New York:

Knopf, 1950). This work, despite its literary finesse and eminent good sense is not widely used in principles of education or methods of teaching courses in college and university departments or schools of education. It is not that the subject matter of the work is irrelevant. It is that the idiom is strange to professionals in teacher education.

p. 77 *"Influence of William James"*

To be sure, it was John Dewey rather than William James who translated the meanings of pragmatism into their more specific educational meanings. This chapter is devoted, however, to the beginnings of the scientific movement in education during the early decades of the twentieth century. The thesis of the chapter is that this earlier educational movement is better to be understood as an expression of Jamesian individualistic pragmatism than of Deweyan experimentalism. James was the senior member among pragmatic thinkers in these early years of the movement.

# The New Education— Three Different Points of View

AS HAS BEEN SUGGESTED, there were some who found in science and democracy, taken as educational ideals, support for a relativistic, almost anti-intellectual kind of educational individualism. They frequently used the terms *science* and *democracy* together. They saw the method of science as tentative and hypothetical rather than didactic and authoritarian. To them, the scientific ideal meant a way of life—a way that liberates men from convention, arbitrary authority, and dogma. They held in mind the long history of conflict between empirical method and deductive or authoritarian method; it appeared to them that science had always been iconoclastic; it had always challenged vested power. To them, it seemed that to be scientific meant to enter into free, open questioning of all established routines. They found in science justification for a kind of romantic *laissez-faire* in school practice. Thus arose the claim of critics of the schools that in the name of a vulgarized, pseudo-scientific point of view, a certain softness and intellectual and moral flabbiness sometimes developed.

Still others, men of different temperament and attitude, were inspired by the possibility

that education could itself become a science. As they saw it, to be scientific meant to apply techniques of quantification and mathematical measurement in order to discover more efficient ways of teaching, building school buildings, working out school financial problems, and managing equipment and personnel. The scientific ideal meant, quite literally, making an experimental science of the educational enterprise. The methodological model was drawn from the physical sciences in which techniques of quantification and precise measurement had been most evidently successful.

For a third group, the ideals of science and democracy in education came to mean the systematic effort to build a reasonable social order. It seemed to them that it should be possible to predict and control social events for the health and welfare of men. This was to be accomplished by applying to social problems those techniques which had proved so successful in medicine, public health, and engineering.

### THE CHILD-CENTERED SCHOOL

The revolt against the Dewey who seemed to say that the school should be adjusted to the child began almost as early among the progressives as it did outside their ranks. Yet, with all the modifications and explanations, Dewey's pedagogy remained an application to the school of the ideals of democratic liberalism which were popular in American culture during the first three or four decades of the present century. Dewey's social theory is of the milieu of Woodrow Wilson or Robert LaFollette. What was different about Dewey the educationist was that he put the social philosophy to work in the very halls, rooms, and grounds of schools. The justification was that schools were in and of the society; he could see no ground for one social morality outside school and another inside. Why? Because children and adolescents are people. After all, it was not until 1920 that women were

finally recognized as people in American political life. Seen this way, progressive education was to children and adolescents what the women's rights movement was to women, and what the fair employment practices and civil rights movements have been to Negroes. The notion can be supported intellectually, and its educational applications can thus be seen as grounded in an understandable theory. However, the notion is also one of sentiment and romance, like the other liberal democratic notions with which we have compared it. Eccentric people who were given to extremes, governed more by feeling than intellect, and lacking good common sense, were swept up by abolition, women's rights, the temperance movement, and various civil rights crusades. Progressive education, likewise, was a humanitarian movement, and it gained its coterie of people of warm sentiment and rattling brains.

So far as fundamental educational theory is concerned, the overweening emphasis upon emancipation of the child passed in the early 'thirties. Since then, fundamental educational theory in the train of John Dewey has moved to a much more sober consideration of the educational significance of the logic of science and a concern about the social conditions of educational liberalism. Nevertheless, the child-centered sentimentalism of early progressive education did not pass from the scene so quickly. Freud provided a new kind of supporting rationale, and the study of child development gained enormous momentum. Today, past mid-century, it may be the child-study specialists working in the tradition of psychoanalysis rather than the pragmatic educational theorists who are primarily responsible for the continuation of the child-centered school.

### *Its slogans*

The educational liberalism of the 'twenties must be distinguished from the liberalism of the classical tradition and of the Judaic-Christian tradition. It has more in common with the earthy lib-

eralism of Walt Whitman. It is an emphasis upon the individual human being as he comes, naked and unschooled, into his culture. There are elements of Rousseau in the ideals of the child-centered school. There is the suggestion that man liberated from the conventions of his society is far more blessed than man nurtured by these conventions. It is not absurd to hold in mind that the decade of the child-centered school was also the decade of Prohibition, of the Charleston, of the flapper, of F. Scott Fitzgerald, and of wild speculation on the stock market. While special economic, political, and social forces were at work, the iconoclasm of the 'twenties found intellectual grounding in the new relativism of the philosophy called pragmatism. For the pragmatic philosophers seemed to advise people to test everything against experience (*their* experience), and it was interpreted to mean that whatever appeared not to "pay off" in immediate gratification might well be discarded.

This way, education has its locus in the experience of children. Who is to judge whether these experiences are worthwhile? The people who are having them, of course. Then what if some things done in school appear not to be received favorably by children? What if the experiences provided by the school do not meet criteria of satisfaction in the lives of the children in the school? Then, the school should be fitted to the child.<sup>1</sup> The task of the school is to meet the needs of children, and the sense of need held by the children is to be studied, respected, and honored.\*

But what happens to subject matter in such a school? Are there not certain things that must be learned, willy-nilly? Perhaps, but any subject matter that remains dull, boring, and apparently meaningless to children at the time when they are assigned to work upon it must be viewed with extreme caution. Children,

<sup>1</sup> See Carleton Washburne, *Adjusting the School to the Child* (New York: World Book Co., 1932); Carollee Pratt, *I Learn from Children* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1918); W. H. Kilpatrick, *Foundations of Method* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

not subject matters, are of prime importance. Teachers teach children, not subjects. When a matter becomes of importance to young people, in their terms and in their own lives, they will want to learn it. It is better to wait. Subject matter laid out in advance has no special sanctity; in fact, it is likely to be inappropriate, for who can predict ahead of time where the interests and concerns of children will lead them?

Does this mean that a group is to sit Quaker-like waiting for the spirit to move? No. This assumes, again, a false conception of learning. Learning is doing. We learn what we live. Therefore, the school should be a living place—a place where young people do things together, things that seem important to them. As they do things together, there will be things to be learned, and here the teacher can help. School becomes more like a settlement house or like the older rural community in which young people learned most of the important things of life not by precept nor even by example, but by active apprenticeship in the activities of the community.<sup>2</sup>

### *Implementation of the slogans*

Actually, fundamental educational theory moved to provide important qualifications to the slogans of the 'twenties during the second quarter of the century. It is interesting to note, however, that as the educational theorists moved away from the slogans, the child-study movement, which was ostensibly experimental rather than theoretical, picked up and gave form to the slogans. The influence of psychoanalytic thought upon child psychologists reinforced the emphasis upon permissiveness and adjustment of the school regimen to the "self-demand schedule" of the child. Forcing children to do things that they did not want to do was

<sup>2</sup> See Joseph K. Hart, *Education in the Humane Community*, a John Dewey Society publication, edited with an introduction by H. Gordon Hullfish (New York: Harper, 1931). L. Thomas Hopkins, *Integration, Its Meaning and Application* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1937). Elsie Clapp, *Community Schools in Action* (New York: Viking, 1939).



considered to have harmful psychological effects. Psychologists presented evidence to show that tiny babies thrive when they determine their own schedules for feeding, evacuating, and sleeping. It was demonstrated that when children were allowed to choose freely from foods available on an open cafeteria line, they chose well-balanced meals. The evils of parental overprotection were pointed out; children must be free to develop in their own way. It was considered that the authoritarian school presents all the psychological hazards pointed out in the authoritarian, overprotective family. A school must be democratic in order to nurture strong, self-reliant young people.

It was recognized that the democratic school is not the same as the anarchic or laissez-faire school. Some sort of order must emerge. However, the order was to emerge not by being imposed from above by authority figures, but according to the needs of children in the school as these are expressed. Again, the analogy of Gesell's self-demand schedule is appropriate. There is to be order, but the order is to be that which arises out of the felt needs of the people involved. In school, this is to be achieved by pupil-planning of activities, in which the teacher is to act as adviser and counselor.

With this tremendous emphasis upon meeting the needs of children and youth—on their own terms—the role of the teacher increasingly becomes that of counselor or adviser. Thus, there is much interest in and concern about guidance. Young people must be helped to make their decisions, but *they* must do the deciding; they must not be told what to do. They must be helped to do what they want to do. This way, guidance is seen to be close to the very center of the work of the school. Not teaching subjects to students but guiding students in their decision-making is the task. Choice of school studies, choice of a life work, choice of a college, choices in the more intimate matters of personal and social life—the trained guidance counselor comes to work in this realm.

Once more, however, the controversy which continues to this day in schools as to whether "every teacher should be a guidance teacher" or whether the guidance functions should be delegated strictly to trained personnel becomes understandable. If the very central function of the school is seen as that of facilitating learning and choice, then of course every teacher must be a guidance teacher. In a school where a dichotomy exists between the guidance personnel and the teaching personnel, there is the suspicion that the non-guidance people are still teaching subjects; this school, then, is not a good school. For in the light of the theory, it is children—not subjects—that are taught.

*Creativity and permissiveness—the child as creator*

Not only psychology but also aesthetics of a sort was drawn upon to support the practices of the child-centered school. A group of educators, literary critics, and artists stress the importance of art and the art experience as neglected dimensions in educational work. These thinkers may be seen as developing a sophisticated educational theory which is in the heritage of the child-centered school.

In a world of ever-increasing change, so their reasoning goes, teachers cannot foretell what children will need to think. Faced with new problems in a new age, it is extremely important, they argue, that sources of unique, creative insight be tapped. If men are to meet change and mold it to their advantage, sources of creative thought and action, warped and suppressed by traditional disciplinary educational practice, must bloom. Our modern interdependent world society cannot trust its affairs to blind forces. If freedom is to be preserved, intelligent, cooperative struggle for freedom is necessary. The struggle demands creative social thinking of a high order, and it is of crucial importance that the schools produce individuals capable of such creative thought. As change is so deep-cutting that order and design cannot be discovered, but must actually be created and imposed, likewise

change is so inclusive that an attempt to deal with it by isolating specific problems for experimental treatment is inadequate. Ends and ideals must be projected. The situation must be sized up and structured as by a creative artist.

American life is characterized by a shallow materialism and opportunism. The artists in America, maintains Lewis Mumford, have not been recognized as they should have been because of this expedient, opportunistic materialism.<sup>3</sup> The artist's vision—his design or ideal in the light of which great plans are made—comes as a deeply personal experience. It is a "one man job" finally.<sup>4</sup> It is not a problem-solving experience in the narrow sense. It involves the feelings, emotions, and total sensitivities of a person. Thus, to treat the method of scientific problem-solving as if it were the only possible educational method is incorrect. There is another method to which attention must be given, designated by Rugg as the method of "organic awareness." This is the method which characterizes the work of artists—in music, the drama, literature, sculpture, and painting.<sup>5</sup> It is this method which should be applied to social problems; man can be a craftsman in the social scene. He can design and operate his own good world.

There is an element of the artist in all men. Each person is to some degree a creator. All products of human endeavor partake of a degree of quality, form, style, and breeding. This is the artistic quality, and it is the product of human creative activity. The artist is an organizer. He is always trying to give form or pattern to life. Yet each person who does creative thinking gives a different expression to life; each expresses what he sees, and each sees it differently. A criticism of the tendency in American schools to emphasize values bound up with production, business, and in-

<sup>3</sup> Lewis Mumford, "Pragmatic Acquiescence: a Reply," *New Republic*, January 19, 1927, p. 251.

<sup>4</sup> See Harold Rugg, *Now is the Moment* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1943), p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

dustry appears. It is said that we have worked for efficiency, adjustment, and equality in such things as employment and housing, but that we have neglected the drama of human living. There has been too much of a tendency, it is asserted, to think of people as machines. People have not been treated as people—as living, feeling human beings with lives full of sorrows and a few joys.<sup>6</sup>

Educational practice must, then, break with the dead hand of the past in order to free human beings to create the new forms of order which are a condition of survival. Educational freedom, the kind of educational freedom that the slogans of the 'twenties and the pronouncements of the child psychologists suggest, is a condition of the good life in a beautiful society. The reason for a child-centered education is to build the future-centered society.

### EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY— THE SCIENCE-OF-EDUCATION MOVEMENT

In every enterprise there is some division between the theorists and the technologists. The latter are the people who "get things done." They are expeditors; they concentrate on acquiring and putting to practice "know-how." They are frequently impatient with the theorists, who keep asking, "Why do we do it this way?" The theoretical mentality has more to do, however, with policy formation, or at least with the framing of statements of policy. Some might argue that framing of policy is many times a kind of rationalization after the fact, merely a kind of "public relations" device. This latter view would make of the educational theorist a kind of educational journalist. Many would counter, on the other hand, that the proposals of the theorists have great significance in pointing the technologists one way or another, that they play a leadership role in creating policy, and that they do more than merely report policy.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Story of Utopias* (New York: Boni and Liveright), 1922.

Professors of education earlier in the present century were frequently technologists rather than philosophers. That is, they gave their attention not so much to fundamental questions of educational aims and purposes but to techniques of pedagogy. Their concern was to make pedagogy scientific; it was with the technology of teaching rather than with the goals of education, and educational technology has not passed from the scene. A formidable array of test batteries, manuals of instruction, and pedagogic machines has apparently been built into American education. The growing popularity at mid-century of devices such as the College Entrance Board examinations and the services of the Educational Testing Service would suggest that technology is here to stay—even in higher education. Intelligence testing, vocabulary grading, various methods of homogeneous grouping for instructional procedures, curriculum organization based on surveys of tasks performed by adults in various occupations, specialization in school organization and instruction, and application of techniques of business management to school administration were proposed by the educational technologists.

It must be emphasized that the "gadgetry" of modern education, epitomized in the minds of some in the so-called "true-false test," is not inescapably involved in progressive education. In fact, the literature of progressive education is replete with criticisms of such devices, and leading educational technologists such as E. L. Thorndike have been sometimes vigorously critical of so-called progressive education. The more vigorous advocates of educational television as a substitute for face-to-face contact between teachers and pupils have been associated with the Fund for the Advancement of Education, which, again, cannot be seen as under the special aegis of progressive education. Actually, Dewey and his followers in progressive education had little if any interest in educational technology of this sort. All modern schools make use of educational technology, but pragmatic or progressivist theory is not responsible for it. Rather, it was educational

psychologists under the leadership of Thorndike who gave it stronger support. George D. Strayer who was, perhaps, the pioneer figure in the development of a so-called science of school administration, was a student and disciple of Thorndike. Probably the educational psychologists rather than Dewey and the "progressives" should be given whatever praise or blame is to be attached to the development of educational technology in twentieth-century America.

To some of those who view modern public education with alarm, there is too much machinery in schools. Children are constantly being tested—not in the subjects which they are studying, but as to personality, mechanical aptitudes, interests, and social adjustment. Printed workbooks are used in many courses; a synthetic, so-called "graded" vocabulary constitutes the books read. There is a plethora of charts, graphs, models, and audio-visual aids. The machinery of the modern school impresses some as having been complicated beyond all reason.

Certainly much of the educational gadgetry is here to stay. Insofar as this involves measurements and computations having to do with construction and maintenance of school buildings, a sober critic can scarcely raise objection. Attractive, hygienically correct school buildings are all to the good. To romanticize old, smelly buildings more or less efficiently managed is far-fetched. Furthermore, to the extent that techniques of the efficiency expert have been applied to the business management of schools, probably the public has gained. Modern public schools are big business. Expert management of funds and records can do no harm.

Much more dubious, however, may be the values accruing from the application of mass production, assembly-line techniques to the process of instruction. How can learning be a creative adventure when it moves in such a maze of standardized, carefully graded, mass-produced workbooks, charts, and filmstrips? Again, if the acid test of learning is the ability to use

knowledge in fresh situations, does the standardized multiple-choice test do it? *The essence of all standardized tests is the controlled response. Alternatives are strictly limited; one of four or five buttons must be pressed; there is no opportunity to explain why. Nevertheless, to reject these devices out-of-hand may well be like refusing to ride in an automobile or make use of the telephone today. Use of devices like the American Council on Education Psychological Examination and the Miller Analogies for college entrance determinations is not likely to pass away in the near future. Even the College Entrance Examination Board tests are now cast in such form that they can be machine-scored. Moreover, it cannot be claimed that the Educational Testing Service at Princeton, New Jersey, has been boycotted by educational traditionalists.*

Although unquestionably the science-of-education movement was, like the child-centered school, inspired by the ideals of science and democracy, its products cannot be evaluated solely in terms of these origins. Nor can educational technology be looked upon as a direct application of pragmatic or progressivist educational theory. How the educational machines invented by the technologists are to be used, and to what extent, are questions that cut across the major lines of educational controversy in our day.

### THE RISE OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTIONISM

A strong case can be made for the view that the very rise of *Education* as college and university subject matter was brought about by the ferment of evolutionary, naturalistic ideas among American intellectuals, and the consequent effort to apply scientific ideals in education. However, an evolutionary, naturalistic ideology may also suggest basic changes in the very conceptions of the purposes of education which men hold; and the literature of educational controversy demonstrates relatively more concern

about these changes in educational goals than about the impact of educational technology.

Thus, regardless of the special techniques to be used in classrooms of schools, what are schools really for? Whose values are to be served in the schools? One answer, inspired and supported to some considerable degree by the theories of evolutionary naturalism, is that the schools are really for the children and that the values of the children are those to be served in the schools. Yet some who began with this individualistic emphasis were struck by the miseducative forces affecting the lives of children and young people outside the school. Thus they tended to emphasize in their educational theorizing the importance of the social context, and the ideals of science and democracy came to mean working deliberately through the schools to achieve a rational social order. The notion that a just society may be established and sustained by an educational program devoted to that end has appeared many times in the history of thought. It is present in Plato's *Republic* and in Comenius' *Great Didactic*. The works of Herbert Spencer and other late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers such as Edward Bellamy involve the idea of a deliberately planned society. Single-tax theorists and supporters of technocracy have, in different ways, suggested the possibility of a planned and planning society through education. Some of the twentieth century educationists considered that if the mission of the schools is to develop intelligence, this meant being critically intelligent about social problems. It also meant, so they reasoned, that the schools would thus teach young people to be critically intelligent about their society, and to try to apply to their roles as citizens the knowledge and methods appropriate to social problems. It was argued that the essence of intelligence is planning—foresight. An unplanned society would therefore appear to be a society dedicated to chance rather than controlled by intelligence.

In organization and support, the public schools are tax-sup-



ported cooperatives. More than that, however, the public schools are inescapably committed to transmitting the official morality. The society does not wish the school to teach how to cheat on the income tax return, how to keep a member of a minority group from buying a home in one's neighborhood, or how to win at a gaming table. Even though some might consider these things important, they nevertheless do not belong to the official morality; therefore, if they are to be acquired, they must be learned outside and not taught formally and deliberately in school.

What is the official if, at points, perhaps unrealistic morality which we affirm as that to be taught admittedly and publicly? It is comprised of honesty, candor, concern for others, sharing and cooperation. The official morality, in other words, is the morality of brotherhood, but there is an obvious dualism in the society with regard to it. We seem to wish it to be taught, but not too well, for it appears that the official morality may become embarrassing if taken too seriously. Nevertheless, there have been some master teachers in the schools, and as they teach the official morality, youngsters are likely to begin to work with it meaningfully and critically. When they do this, some of the customary ways of businessmen and politicians appear to be morally questionable.

Over and above the ideological and sociological factors mentioned in preceding paragraphs, it should be pointed out that in the 'twenties and 'thirties educationists, like sociologists, historians, economists, and philosophers, frequently discussed current social and economic theories. Of course there were some socialists in education, as there were some in other fields of research and inquiry. In the deepest years of the Depression a few of these considered the possibility that the public school might be used as a deliberate instrument of social reconstruction to bring about a social organization grounded in critically intelligent planning rather than *laissez-faire*. The movement gained relatively few disciples. After the beginning of World

War II, it largely passed from attention. Nevertheless, a handful of leading educationists have worked to keep such considerations alive. They continue to provide a target for those who would criticize the public school for a so-called socialistic bias.

It is now a commonplace that the Depression of 1929 extending into and through the 'thirties carried with it a deep-moving shift in cultural outlook in the United States. The exuberant immaturities of the 'twenties were supplanted by a more sombre concern about the economic future of our nation. Were the characteristics of the 'twenties completely lost, however? Recall the political and economic iconoclasm of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the "Happy Days are Here Again" campaign song. Moreover, the repeal of the 18th Amendment in a sense brought to reality a persisting fantasy of the 'twenties. The question raised is whether the values of the 'twenties had changed. Perhaps not. Perhaps what American people still wanted was liberty to have a good time in their own way, making their own rules. It may well be, then, that the so-called "mentality of the 'thirties" had to do with changes in strategies for realizing the values of the 'twenties.

Here we mean by "the mentality of the 'thirties" a set of ideas about economy and politics in the United States. As the Depression dragged on, with many Americans experiencing misery in a land of plenty and with the more fortunate looking backward with sadness at the passing of the great fun of the 'twenties, some concluded that social control of the means of production was the answer. Apparently capitalism had failed. Apparently the liberal ideals of the 'twenties were only to be realized as the people took over the means of production. Was it possible that a new social order was demanded in the United States? To be sure, this did not mean a society in which the basic civil liberties had been surrendered as in totalitarian states but, nevertheless, a society in which wealth was more equitably distributed to those whose sweat and pain had been instrumental

in producing it. But why? What was the appeal? What values was it thought might be thus achieved? Notice that the values were finally those of food, clothing, shelter, and security—they were economic values. They were the values of the realm of the natural, rather than those of the realm of the supra-mundane. The values of the Depression years were similar to those of the 'twenties. The change of mentality had to do with proposals for achieving them.

Thus it becomes possible to understand how educators who, in an earlier day, had given adherence to the child-centered school movement, began after 1929 to give more and more attention to ways and means by which the school might contribute to the building of a new social order in which such depressions did not occur.\* Writings by John Dewey, W. H. Kilpatrick, and their followers and colleagues throughout the country reveal this shift in emphasis. Whereas before 1929 these thinkers devoted their major statements on educational matters to proposals for providing more creative freedom for youngsters in schools, after 1929 they gave much more attention to the social conditions for such freedom. Once again this is understandable, and it does not mean that the positions of the pre-Depression years were being completely negated. A modicum of security in the possession of food, clothing, and shelter is presupposed in any efforts to bring about greater liberty for children in schools.

The argument over means and ends during the Depression years produced the internal dissension among progressive educationists which contributed to the collapse of organized progressive education. The social reconstructionists held that experience-centered, pupil-planned, activity schools, although in many ways ideal schools, could not cope with the problems of social reconstruction demanded in the Depression. Our society was seen as engaged in a fierce class struggle, and control of the schools was one of the issues at stake. The free, open, pupil-planning advocated earlier by most followers of Dewey and

Kilpatrick was viewed as lending itself to subtle propaganda by the power groups in America motivated by their own selfish interests. Some concluded that the experience-centered, pupil-planned activity school could only exist in a society in which economic justice had been achieved. This being the case, certain educational tasks having to do with reconstruction of the social order must take priority over the demands of the ideal school talked about in the 'twenties.

### *The school a means of social reconstruction*

A credo for the social reconstructionists was furnished when George Counts published his sensational *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?* in 1932.<sup>7</sup> A book edited by Kilpatrick, to which Dewey, Childs, Counts, and others contributed (*Educational Frontier*, 1938)<sup>8</sup> developed the theme of social action through the schools. Two educational journals, *The Social Frontier*<sup>9</sup> and *Frontiers of Democracy*,<sup>10</sup> became organs of discussion and controversy, the persisting theme being the role of the schools in bringing about social change.

The social reconstructionists argued that some sort of indoctrination is inescapable in educational work. Their argument was that of the "frame of reference" as developed by the new historians. A point of view always operates, so they argued. Teachers

<sup>7</sup> George S. Counts, *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?* (New York: Day, 1932).

<sup>8</sup> W. H. Kilpatrick, ed., and others, *The Educational Frontier* (New York: Century, 1933).

<sup>9</sup> *The Social Frontier*: a journal of educational criticism and reconstruction, Vols. 1-10, no. 81 (October, 1934-December, 1943). Published in New York by The Social Frontier, Inc., 1934-43. Oct., 1937-June, 1939, "A medium of expression of the John Dewey Society for the Study of Education and Culture."

<sup>10</sup> With the October, 1939, issue, the title *Frontiers of Democracy* was substituted for the former title *The Social Frontier*. From October, 1939-December, 1943, the reference to the John Dewey Society was dropped. *Frontiers of Democracy* was published by the Progressive Education Association. Publication ceased with V. 10, No. 81 (December, 1943).

cannot be neutral. This being the case, it is important to decide deliberately and critically which point of view is to dominate educational work. At a time when a great nation is in deep economic difficulty an educational *sine qua non* is an intellectual orientation which places the school on the side of social justice. There is a moral obligation here—the moral obligation for organized, institutionalized education to dedicate itself to bringing about the social conditions that make freedom possible.

However, when this is done systematically and deliberately, with intent, what happens to the freedom, the activity, the deeply sensitive concern for the individual about which the earlier child-centered school people had talked? To some considerable degree they go by the board, at least until the crisis has passed. Thus, so far as pedagogy is concerned, the social reconstructionists might be said to have been conservative or traditional. More didactic, more formally structured methods of teaching were suggested and, certainly, using the school to build a new social order demands a structured curriculum.

The progressivists who continued to hold to the values of the child-centered school were at first confused, then indignant. They claimed that the social reconstructionists were violating the avowed ends in the means.\* They insisted that liberty, democracy, experience, and activity in schools with aims and ends determined as much by the children as by the teachers were unqualified goods, and that no economic crisis could justify giving up these educational means.

### *Social reconstruction at mid-century*

During the years of World War II the social reconstructionist discussion gradually faded. So many far-reaching social reforms had been achieved during the Roosevelt Administration that some educators considered the battle for social justice to be won. In any case, unemployment and overproduction were

problems no more, and the moral issues posed by Nazism and Fascism overshadowed domestic concerns. Then too, extremists among the child-centered school group had, on their own and in response to the social changes of the years, become less extreme. Once more the values of liberty, experience, and activity, along with cooperative planning in classrooms had not been forsworn. However, more and more attention was being given to the importance of order in educational work, and more and more educators were ready to grant that children grow up not in a vacuum but in social conditions of a special sort in special times and places. Yet the social reconstructionist point of view did not die out completely. Harold Rugg, B. Othanel Smith, William O. Stanley, and Theodore Brameld<sup>11</sup> are among contemporary educators who continue to use the term and continue to devote thought to the ways in which the school can function as an instrument of social reconstruction while preserving essential democratic civil liberties.

### *The social reconstructionist platform*

*Utopian vision.* It is argued by the reconstructionists that creative social thought must be inspired by a vision, by a kind of imagined utopia. The vision is grounded in critical intellectual formulations, yet it is held as a far-off goal or target, the complete fulfillment of which is not expected in the near future.<sup>12</sup> What America needs, it is said, is an organic order that takes form as

<sup>11</sup> Theodore Brameld, *Towards a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education* (New York: Dryden, 1956); Harold Rugg and William Withers, *Social Foundations of Education* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955), pp. 623 ff.; B. Othanel Smith, William O. Stanley, and J. Harlan Shores, *Fundamentals of Curriculum Development* (Yonkers: World Book Co., 1950), pp. 187, 724-43.

<sup>12</sup> See Mumford, *The Story of Utopias*, p. 252. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1936) and Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1940) are works occasionally cited by those who would advocate social reconstruction through education.

creative geniuses work on the social scene. This will arise, so we are told, from the creators of new ideas.<sup>13</sup>

Since the method of creation is seen as a method over and above the method of problem-solving, there is some considerable criticism of the experimentalist preoccupation with the methodology of problem-solving as the complete delineation of intellectual method. The method of experimental science is not fully adequate for this creative task.<sup>14</sup>

The experimental method applied wholesale has destroyed old objects of loyalty, but it has failed to point out and define new objects to take their place.<sup>15</sup> It presents a valid description of psychology of democratic action, but it needs supplementation in the location of goals, aims, and values.<sup>16</sup> There are certain situations in which one does not respond as one would to a problem.<sup>17</sup> One of these is that of meeting complicated social situations. The effective approach to social problems is the method of creating and designing; this is the method by which order and unity are achieved in complicated situations characterized by disorder and lack of unity.

*Intellectuals and artists as leaders.* Although an effort may be made to develop creative ability in all, actual social control

<sup>13</sup> See Theodore Brameld, *Patterns of Educational Philosophy* (Yonkers: World Book Co., 1950), pp. 511 ff. and *passim*. See also Brameld, *Towards a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education*. Mannheim's discussion of the role of intellectuals in bringing about social change as well as the work of Gunnar Myrdal are considered to be relevant. See also Waldo Frank, *Re-discovery of America* (New York: Scribners, 1929), p. 154.

<sup>14</sup> Harold Rugg, *Culture and Education in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), pp. 141, 215; *American Life and the School Curriculum* (Boston: Ginn, 1931), p. 440; *That Men May Understand* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1941), pp. 361 ff.; *Now is the Moment* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1943), *passim*. Also Harold O. Rugg, ed., and others, *Democracy and the Curriculum*, Yearbook No. 3 of the John Dewey Society (New York: Appleton-Century, 1939), p. 251.

<sup>15</sup> Rugg, *Culture and Education in America*, p. 141; *Democracy and the Curriculum*, p. 251; *That Men May Understand*, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> *That Men May Understand*, pp. 320 ff.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 326, 328.

at a given time and place may come to reside more directly with a few outstanding artist-planners. These leaders must have a comprehensive grasp of the genius of America, from which they state the elements of design toward which we must strive.<sup>18</sup> Artists, engineers, and intellectuals must proceed to put the plan into effect and operate it. Organized leadership in such a great social enterprise is essential.<sup>19</sup> The leaders are the artist geniuses. They must lead because they have unique ability to impose order on what seems to lesser men to be chaos. Rugg believes that these leaders are masters of a certain method, different from that of science, unique, distinctive. It is the method of organic awareness or intuition.<sup>20</sup> It is the method of poetry—the method of creative imagination.<sup>21</sup> The artist's vision is better, truer, more beautiful than the partial insights of his fellows.

*Defensible partiality in education.* Through education, a deliberate effort is to be made to persuade people that this is the best way. However, discussion, challenge, disagreement are not only to be allowed; they are to be encouraged. The educational technique advocated is not that of propaganda but it is that of persuasion. A deliberate effort should be made to organize the school studies and activities around the aims and goals involved in the utopian vision. Thus the educational program advocated is a "future-centered" one.<sup>22</sup>

*The battle for consent.* Through mass education, therefore, an effort is to be made to develop the artist in all men, and to bring all men to an appreciative understanding and commitment to the utopian ideal. Force is not advocated as a means for bringing about commitment, but persuasion is. The techniques of per-

<sup>18</sup> Waldo Frank, *Re-discovery of America*, pp. 154, 243 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Rugg, *Now is the Moment*, especially Chapter VI.

<sup>20</sup> Rugg, *That Men May Understand*, p. 317 and *passim*; *Now is the Moment*, p. 106 and *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> *Now is the Moment*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> See Brameld, *Towards a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education*.



suasion include myth, religion, art, and group dynamics. The aim is to achieve democratic consensus through an educational program arranged to persuade but not to coerce.<sup>23</sup>

*The controversial character of social reconstruction*

The position of thinkers like Rugg, Brameld, Mumford, and Frank has become an unusually controversial one because of its emphasis upon social planning. If social planning be art, a crucial question would seem to be whether the method of the artists can be shared by all. It may be questioned whether a method of communication has yet been devised which will make possible democratic sharing of the insights of artists and intellectuals. This being the case, to advocate that artists and intellectuals do the planning may be to insist that the democratic method be sacrificed for the sake of efficiency and beauty. If the masses cannot communicate with the artists, establishment of a bureaucracy of artists would appear to be an undemocratic move. Rugg and Brameld maintain that the values for which they stand are individual values. At the root of their educational concern is the concern about full, rich, creative living for men and women, boys and girls. It is in the name of the intrinsic values of individual expression that they advocate social planning; hence, there is clear continuity between the values of the child-centered school of the 'twenties and the social reconstructionism of the later years. The planned society is a means, not an end in itself. Nevertheless, there is ground for concern that the means advocated may endanger the ends-in-view.

*Summary*

As twentieth century educators worked to build an educational program in the light of a scientific ideal, three quite different types of educational emphasis took form. For some, the effort was to make

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

of education a science like physics or chemistry. For others, the effort was to secure an educational scheme which would give each child as much freedom to explore, invent, investigate, and create as possible, as if each child were a creative researcher in the laboratory of life. For still others, a major emphasis was upon educational conditions for establishing a cooperative, planning society in which men had sufficient social and economic security to free them for creative living.

Each of these movements—"the science of education movement," "the child-centered school," and "social reconstructionism"—made an impact upon American schools and contributed to the New Education.\* At the same time, each must be looked upon as a historical phenomenon to be recognized as a part of the development of modern education, but not as a contemporary live option. The American public school never became a child-centered school or a social reconstructionist school. Furthermore, despite the wide use of various devices invented by the technologists, the school never became an institution that was actually run on technological lines.

### Notes

- p. 91 "...needs of children ... to be studied, respected, and honored."

A survey of the schools in which the practices of child-centered education were actually applied reveals an overwhelming preponderance of private experimental institutions. Those public schools that were involved were upper middle-class suburban institutions, e.g., Winnetka, Illinois. The significance of the movement is greater than this would suggest, however. Even though relatively few public schools practiced "child-centered" education, a body of imagined models which became the vogue in professional literature and professional gatherings was provided.

- p. 103 "... it becomes possible to understand how educators began ... to give more and more attention to ways and means by which the school might contribute to the building of a new social order ..."

The social reconstructionist emphasis cannot be dismissed in

perfunctory fashion, regardless of the political and social bias of the critic. If schools do anything at all, they produce changes in people and thereby—in future generations—change the society. Whenever deliberate education is effective, it affects the future. Whether or not effective, the enterprise of school programming is always guided by judgments about which things are to be preserved and extended in coming generations.

- p. 105 "They claimed that the social reconstructionists were violating the avowed ends in the means."

Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (New York: Macmillan, 1941) is one of the most impressive explorations of this conflict between ends and means in social change. Throughout Brameld's *Towards a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education* a concern to safeguard humane ends in educational means is expressed, as in his earlier book *Ends and Means in Education* (New York: Harper, 1950). Nevertheless, some have concluded that deliberate use of the schools to achieve social reconstruction on a broad scale, even when administered with care, is the death of true education for freedom. The social reconstructionists adopted the view that the democratic code had been so grossly violated by those in positions of economic and political power that educators must somehow secure power to fight back. That is, the social reconstructionists saw the struggle as a power struggle, the democratic code having been broken. Other educators, a few of them leaders in the Progressive Education Association and the John Dewey Society, saw preservation of the democratic code as the highest value and were not willing to enter as educators into the deliberate seeking of political power. Their view was that to participate in such an effort would violate their highest trust as teachers. Such was the view of Boyd Bode and H. Gordon Hullfish of Ohio State University. Although Bode and Hullfish advocated, in the pages of *The Educational Frontier* and in articles in *Frontiers of Democracy* and *The Social Frontier*, that social problems be studied and critically analyzed in schools, they staunchly maintained

that all shades of honest opinion on these matters must be heard. They were unwilling to see the school committed as an institution to a particular partisan point of view. Thus Hullfish in 1953 indicates his disagreement with those who "... are sure that we now know enough so as not to waste time arguing about the validity of certain ends (from economic form to patterns of world government) over others. . . ."

Man has learned through experience . . . Yet this accumulation of knowledge does not mean that he may at some moment of time (perhaps to be judged to be the right moment by those who know that we do now know enough) strike off the blueprint for the future with full assurance in the infallibility of his judgment. . . .

To reject a single set of directions for the school is not to turn away from the initial interest of making maturing directional. The direction flag still flies: a continuing loyalty on the part of education to the steady extension of human freedom. . . . The quest on man's part for ever better ends is an unending one. Men are not mistaken when they engage in it. They are wrong only when they heed those who claim to have reached the end of the road, those whom the spirit of questing has fled.

[H. Gordon Hullfish, "Education in an Age of Anxiety," Chapter 11 in *Educational Freedom in an Age of Anxiety*, Twelfth Yearbook of the John Dewey Society, ed. H. Gordon Hullfish (New York: Harper, 1953), pp. 216-17.]

- p. 110 *"Each of these movements . . . made an impact upon American schools and contributed to the New Education."*

Each of the three emphases pointed out as involved in different ways in the New Education, i.e., educational technology, the child-centered school, and social reconstructionism, had their counterparts in the broader culture. Blaming the schools or the "professional educationists" for these movements as if they represented an occult endeavor removed from the cultural and intellectual movements of their age is a gross example of "scapegoating." Educational technology had its counterpart in behavioristic psychology, and in the rise of social and political "science." The cult of the child

was expressed in psychoanalytic thought and in certain vogues of child-rearing widely adopted by middle-class parents. Certainly, the ideals of the reconstructionists were expressed by city planners and the far-flung social engineering schemes of the New Deal.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# The Practice of the New Education in the Public Schools

A FUNDAMENTAL thesis of the preceding chapters has been that the course of educational theory and practice in the twentieth century has paralleled the course of social thought in the twentieth century. A persisting influence has been the impact of experimental science on the spirit of the times. It is not that science makes it impossible for men to hold to a traditional world view, but that experimental science, reflected upon and held to as a primary intellectual resource, encourages, supports, and tends to bring about fundamental shifts in philosophical orientation.

Criticisms of the points of view we have attempted to describe and analyze in preceding chapters have been myriad, violent, and frequently virulent. Early progressive education was criticized for its individualism, for its lack of system, and for a pervading sugary sentimentalism. The concern in later years for programs of social action to establish a cultural context in which the ideals of child-centered education might be more broadly achieved, felt by some who had earlier pushed the values of the child-centered school, was attacked as socialistic. The pressure of these dissensions was most certainly a major factor in the weak-

ening of the Progressive Education Association which was finally officially dissolved in the summer of 1955. However, it is an absurd notion that the movement was somehow a subversive one, manipulated by evil men motivated by their own greed for power. The ideals, values, and political and educational practices advocated have been a part of broad social and intellectual movements of the twentieth century. Since these movements have been of the warp and woof of our contemporary culture, all twentieth century men have been part of them.

Public schools across the land were never generally characterized by the extremes represented in the so-called "child-centered school," nor did public school teachers and administrators in large numbers flock to the banners of the social reconstructionists. On the other hand, the pedagogic and administrative devices invented by the educational technologists were widely adopted. How much of the theory preached by the professional educationists did get into the schools? What, after all, did the American public tax-supported school of the mid-twentieth century stand for? Have the traditionalists been sparring with a straw man, or have the public schools in fact departed from tradition?\*

### NEUTRALITY REJECTED

By mid-century the public schools had rejected the ideal of neutrality, although, as has been suggested, some laymen probably had not. In the schools, in any case, it was recognized that teachers cannot remain within their specialties and do their work from day to day without conscious regard for the broad "rules of the game." A concern with subject matter narrowly conceived was looked upon as a symptom of meaningless, artificial teaching removed from life and life concerns. There remained no place on a school faculty so protected that a teacher could isolate himself. He was seen as working with whole human beings; his set of class meetings was considered to be but a small phase in the

lives of his students. His sphere of activity was considered to have been set out and defined by the pattern of social forces out of which have evolved roads, factories, banks, churches, public schools, and classes within those schools.

It was considered that a teacher is a professional automaton and a poor teacher when he is not critically aware of the generalizations that guide him; it was thought that he is master of himself and a contributor to the professional growth and vitality of his group when he is conscious of the fundamental principles and when he, with his fellows, makes efforts to refine and apply them. These efforts are made, it was believed, within and as applied to a social institution whose role and function has been defined progressively in the United States. These definitions are subject to challenge and modification, but challenges and proposals for modification must take account of them. Thus, teaching came to be looked upon as a form of social leadership and interpretation. The school was seen as an institution sensitively responsible to its culture and the social values of its milieu. Education, that is, was seen as a function of time and place—a mundane activity in which the values men live by are extended and refined.\*

### THE PUBLIC SCHOOL A SECULAR INSTITUTION

It was believed that the school is to serve all youth of the community. Despite pressures, public opinion supported this conception, at least until the strong wave of criticism at mid-century. As Professor Harold Benjamin put it, with special reference to the high school,

No recital of the opinion of minorities in the United States who believe that reading, writing and arithmetic to age twelve or fourteen are sufficient for children of the masses, no listing of statistics which reveal the inadequacy of secondary education in many parts of the country, no working over the gross inequalities in education on the secondary as well as on the elementary and higher levels can change the simple fact



that the people of the United States, in overwhelming majority, believe in secondary schooling for every young citizen without regard to wealth, color, or even intelligence quotient.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the comprehensive school rather than specialized vocational or preparatory schools was that maintained by preference in most American communities. It was considered that the needs of no special group are entitled to priority.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of special individual needs and interests, which there may well be considerable effort to fulfill, it was considered that the primary job of the public school is to preserve and foster the conditions of community living which make for liberty. The conception of citizenship involved in American democracy was a central guiding conception.

We have a common language and common ideals of government and civic responsibility, the values of which must be placed at the very heart of the public school program.<sup>3</sup>

Inasmuch as the common ground to be laid was seen to be that making for individual liberty and self-determination, the central concern was to provide a ground of common understandings and skills which make for rapid and effective interchange of opinion in a free and fluid society. Thus it was not possible to ground the common learnings in some sort of comprehensive political ideology, as when in a totalitarian state, party doctrine is made the core of the curriculum. Nor was it possible to ground the common learnings in some theological or metaphysical system, as in a theocratic state where the subjects to be taught are ordered according to a conception of God's plan for man and the world. Since our country was neither a totalitarian state nor a theocracy, what was the educational core?

<sup>1</sup> Harold Benjamin, "Editor's Introduction," in *Principles of Secondary Education* by Rudyard K. Bent and Henry H. Kronenberg (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1941), p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> University of the State of New York, *Basic Issues in Secondary Education; a Report of a Consultative Committee of the New York State Education Department* (Albany: University of the State of New York Press, 1945), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

## SCIENCE THE SOURCE OF REGULATING VALUES

Public school policy came increasingly to affirm that authority in a democracy is the authority of the people. The state was looked upon as the creation of the people; public institutions such as the public school were looked upon as created by the people through the administrative mechanisms constituting the state. The method that made possible action by the whole people was seen to be the method of free, open criticism.

This emphasis upon criticism, upon open-mindedness coupled with individual conviction, and upon free argument and debate as the way of making decisions was seen by many leaders in public school education to be an extension and application to human affairs of the critical, experimental temper characteristic of the sciences. To be scientific is to be skeptical, critical, open-minded; it is to accept as true or reliable that which can be demonstrated openly, publicly, honestly, obviously. The truth-claim of the proposition that men live on the moon cannot be thus demonstrated; the proposition that men live on the moon was, in consequence, seen as a proposition that does not belong in the public school curriculum. The proposition that a proletarian revolution is a necessary condition of social progress cannot be demonstrated; it was considered that it does not belong in the schools. The proposition that a loving Heavenly Father has created men and that they should love and obey him cannot be demonstrated; it was therefore judged that even this proposition, so precious to so many Americans, does not belong in the public school.

A central emphasis in the philosophy of John Dewey, and one which remained central in the thinking of the educationists who worked in his train, is upon the method of science as the method of reflective intelligence—no matter what the subject of investigation may be.

What is indeed distinctive of Dewey is that he grounded his liberalism in a conception of human nature adequate to the facts of biological, psychological, and social inquiry, and in an estimate of the powers of human reason congruous with the operation and achievements of reflective thought in modern science.<sup>4</sup>

Dewey was largely concerned with developing a critique of dominant traditions and beliefs, so as to make them compatible with the possibilities inherent in present science and technology.<sup>5</sup>

The core of a liberal philosophy of civilization is its commitment to the use of the method of scientific intelligence for ascertaining the facts of existence, for adjudicating between competing moral claims, and for implementing social policy.<sup>6</sup>

## CENTRALITY OF CRITICAL INTELLIGENCE

Educationists came to take the stand that the primary objective of the public school was that of preparing young people to make decisions critically and intelligently. This, it seemed, was the best way to preserve liberty. Also, it was judged that exercise of intelligence involves use of a method; it involves commitment to this method as the best one for arriving at decisions. This method involves the ability to be critical and scientific, and the mastery of knowledge that is instrumental to critical decision-making. It involves an uncompromising insistence upon full publicity, with the view that only propositions that withstand full publicity are dependable. Thus, moral virtues such as honesty, truthfulness and courage were not to be supported by reference to some abstract doctrine. If honesty was a virtue to be taught in the public school, the reasons why were to be found by critical analysis and examination, not in private, dogmatic commitments. The fact that the school was a public institution meant that the sources of its authority must be public sources, and a truly public proposi-

<sup>4</sup> Ernest Nagel, *Liberalism and Intelligence*. Fourth John Dewey Memorial Lecture (Bennington, Vt.: Bennington College, 1957), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

tion is one that can withstand open, critical scientific examination.

The critical method may be described and analyzed. However, it cannot be learned in the abstract. It is learned as it is used. Knowledge is a part of a process; hence, some knowledge must be at command—but knowledge is instrumental in the process, not an end in itself. The teaching job from day to day therefore requires mastery of knowledge instrumental for use in solving problems. However, concern about teaching of intellectual method suffuses or colors all teaching activity.

### *Knowledge an instrumental value*

It was considered that there was no necessary, direct, one-to-one relationship between mastery of knowledge and intelligence. Public school people came to think that intelligence was not the ability to recite "Abou ben Adam" or the names of the Stuart kings in the order of their succession. Intelligence was the ability to solve real life problems as they come your way. It was seen as the ability to get along with people; the ability to fix a hay loader with a piece of fence wire; the ability to find the road home when lost in the dark of night; the ability to pick a good husband or get along with one picked at a weak moment; the ability to be a statesman; and the only hope for a world united at peace. In a way, what was meant by intelligence was something like what the Greeks meant by wisdom, although the term *wisdom* has taken on a kind of aristocratic aura due to its association with classical philosophy. Intelligence was seen as essentially "know-how," but only incidentally "know-why." Thus the pure knowledge to which the scholars claimed to be loyal was not the same as the *intelligence* to which the public school gave high respect. The public school was not so much concerned about knowledge for its own sake as about knowledge for use.

To make intelligence the prime educational value was to say that ability to solve problems is the ability that is to be developed

in the young. Unfortunately, this emphasis upon problem-solving in the public schools occasionally issued in educational practice that minimized the importance of mastery of knowledge necessary for solving the problems. In any case, however, the emphasis was always upon knowledge which could be *used*. There was little toleration for merely ornamental knowledge. The school subjects were to be practical subjects.

### *Problem-and interest-centered approach*

It was decided that the best way to teach young people to be critically intelligent is to organize the work of the school around significant problems. This was sometimes interpreted to mean that a school course should be organized around problems that students said they wanted to investigate. There was ample evidence that when people worked on something they wanted to work on and that they considered to be important, they worked harder. However, most public school people were careful not to elevate this perfectly sound principle of pedagogy or teaching method into an adequate principle of curriculum organization. For most public school people, to say that students learn more rapidly and thoroughly when allowed to follow out their interests did not imply that school programs should be organized solely around the immediately felt and directly expressed interests of students. They realized that there may be serious problems of which the individual is unaware. Serious needs may exist in the situation, yet people may be unaware of those needs. The distinction between felt needs and interests and objective needs, as made by Professor Sidney Hook, was accepted by most school people:

As a term it [the word *need*] is ambiguous and slippery but in educational context it can be given sufficient precision to rescue it from those who use it interchangeably with interests, preferences, likes, and desires. A need in education is any want, absence or lack whose fulfillment is a necessary condition for the achievement of a desirable end. It follows therefore that needs are *objective*, not errant offsprings of fancy, and that they are not only individual but also *social*, related essentially to value-

norms rooted in the community. If health is a desirable educational goal, then the needs of a child for proper food, or for special treatment to counteract a deficiency, are objective even if he is unaware of them. When these needs become felt needs, the specific processes of interaction between the individual and his environment by which these needs are fulfilled will be reinforced by the powers of organic impulse. When these needs become *intelligently* felt needs, the individual displays a greater initiative and responsibility in determining the quality and direction of his educational experience. He learns more, integrates better, sees more deeply. The drive to fill his needs becomes voluntarily sustained against obstacles. Out of this voluntarily sustained—because intelligently felt—drive, there is born a discipline more pervasive and more reliable than any imposed by external rewards or fear of punishment.

What determines the existence of needs in the individual are natural structures and social institutions and the operation of intelligence. Their recognition, in the first instance, is the task of parent and teacher, family, and school. The child, later the student, actively cooperates in setting needs; but until full maturity is reached they cannot assume total responsibility for the decision as to what constitutes their educational needs.<sup>7</sup>

In setting up a curriculum, then, it was considered desirable, but not essential that students want to study certain subjects. A better learning situation was considered to exist when the need is felt. When the need is not felt, the teacher certainly faced a more difficult teaching situation. Nevertheless, immediate felt needs of school students were not to be the significant determiners of the curriculum. The curriculum, it was thought, must be organized around problems, but these are to be real issues of currently objective significance, not passing whims of young people.

#### *Subject matter pragmatically determined*

Thus, we see that the public school leaders did have a place for subject matter. Organization of subject matter and systematic, orderly teaching of subject matter was respected, but the traditional customary list of required and elective courses was subjected to thoroughgoing, ruthless criticism. The criteria of tradition and ornamentation were not accepted as adequate. The

<sup>7</sup> Sidney Hook, *Education for Modern Man* (New York: Dial, 1946), pp. 145-46.

demand made by public school people was that any subject matter must have demonstrable worth in the kind of world in which the shared lives of boys and girls are to be lived. It must be what they need, and need was to be determined on the basis of an objective, critical, empirical examination of the stresses and strains, the demands and opportunities of the foreseeable future in the time and place in which they were living their lives.

### *Commitment to the democratic spirit*

One commitment which, although not always made explicit, came to be as strong as any in the platform of public school policy was that school should be a happy place.\* This preference was supported by the ideals of democracy, by research coming from psychologists, and by public opinion. The conception that learning is inescapably painful was discarded. The tradition that the young must be forced to work by use of external pressures was called into question. In a free society, so the reasoning went, children and young people in school are also people and are also Americans. Thus they are to have a part in deciding upon their activities. Even their tastes regarding the school's decor are to be respected. This attitude of humane respect for children and youth is clearly reflected in the changes in school architecture that have come about during the past half-century. School rooms are work rooms, with counters, tools, bulletin boards, and social alcoves. They are light, airy, and frequently they open directly to the outside. They are places where people live, and the furniture and arrangements partake of the qualities of living rooms.

It is clear then that American public education as characterized here has become a controversial enterprise. Do we not now have guidemarks to show why American educationists—those students of American society and education who defend the basic policies of the American secular school—are under vigorous attack? At a time when many are suggesting that some form of religious instruction be brought into the schools and that ethical

and social beliefs should be indoctrinated, they maintain that the public school is a strictly secular institution. This so-called "secularism" of American education has been criticized by various religious groups, and, less frequently, there have been examples of criticism of the schools because of their alleged failure to indoctrinate "Americanism" or "free enterprise."

At a time when many are saying that an emphasis upon science and criticism involves neglect of values, they assert that the method of science and scientifically established value-propositions must be the basis of the common learnings. Scientific or technological bias in American public education has, as we have seen, come in for criticism by scholars in the humanities who maintain that science deals only with a part of life, and cannot be a primary resource for a program of general education. It has also been criticized by religionists on the ground that an experimental technological mentality leaves no room for faith. At a time of growing interest on the part of humanistic scholars and religionists in traditional fields of scholarship, they maintain that the demands of contemporary society, not tradition, should determine the common learnings.

These policies of the public schools have come in for fierce criticism.\* The view has been that the school curriculum has been "watered down." Carelessness, superficiality, and disrespect for organized knowledge have ensued, so it is claimed.

### *Summary*

The purpose of this chapter has been to state the platform of the American secular tax-supported school. The object has been to present a description of the sort of institution which is being criticized by the traditionalists. Several characteristics have been emphasized in preceding pages.

1) The American public school has been a secular, non-political institution. Religious worship and instruction in religion has been deliberately omitted from its program. Once more, deliberate political indoctrination has been omitted. At the same time, since there



has been a very high degree of local self-determination in American education, schools have ordinarily taken on certain of the local religious and political characteristics. The economics taught in rock-ribbed Republican communities has more often than not been conservative and Republican in tone; religious overtones in school assemblies and commencement ceremonies, such as the high school baccalaureate service, have existed. Nevertheless, religious and political impartiality have been the accepted principles.

2) Increasingly, the American public school has come to make science the basis of the common learnings. Despite the public furor over the Scopes trial, biological evolution has come to be taught in schools. Increasingly, some form of sex education based on science rather than tradition or religion has been introduced.

3) The American public school came to stand for the development of critical intelligence in the young as the highest educational value. But considerable confusion about the proper educational implementation of this principle has always existed among school people. Some have considered that the best way to achieve this goal is simply to keep youngsters healthy and happy; thus a cult of free, undisciplined expression arose. Some failed to take seriously the role of carefully mastered knowledge as a part of the equipment of the critically intelligent individual; thus, systematic development of subject matter was de-emphasized. Despite these confusions, however, it may be said that American public education never adopted the sentimental individualism of the so-called "child-centered school." Teachers continued to teach subjects, but there was a pronounced tendency to modify and simplify subject matter according to the expressed needs and interests of the young people, to allow them to range more widely and, thus, more superficially within and among subject matters. That is, there was a tendency to modify systematic scholarly rigor in the light of the preferences of students in the schools.

4) Every opportunity was taken in American public schools to allow more freedom of choice to young people. Options among various courses of study were provided. Many new curricula were introduced. Again, as has been said, within classes they were given more freedom to determine what they wished to study and learn. Nevertheless, American schools never gave up the policy of requiring some sort of core of common learnings. Extended study of English and American language and literature, history, political science was re-

quired. Foreign languages, especially the classical languages, became "electives" rather than "required," however. Some study of science and mathematics was required, but more traditional branches of mathematics and science, such as algebra, geometry, chemistry, and physics, were de-emphasized. Instead, general science and general mathematics grew in popularity. The firmly established principle came to be that the demands of contemporary American social and economic life rather than scholarly traditions provide the criteria for determining the common learnings.

5) The American public school accepted the principle that school should be a place where young people enjoy themselves. Spontaneity and informality in classrooms and a tremendous range of social activities—dances, parties, ball games—have been encouraged.

### Notes

p. 115 "... have the public schools in fact departed from tradition?"

A certain tendency of astute educational politicians speaking of the educational controversy has been to de-emphasize the issues by insisting that the schools have always done all the things that the various protagonists want done anyway. Handled effectively, this device, is one way to manage controversy. It is to insist that the issues are "manufactured out of thin air." The purpose of this chapter, to the contrary, is to demonstrate that the American public schools, although not characteristically applying the extreme versions of educational technology, the child-centered school, or social reconstructionism, have nevertheless operated upon an identifiable platform of policy. That is, that the public schools in practice have stood for something, but not for everything.

p. 116 "Education . . . seen as a . . . mundane activity . . ."

Perhaps one of the more pronounced tendencies in American education has been an effort to combine incompatible goods. Thus, there has been a widely held notion that the school finally prepares young people to get out into the world of work in command of specific marketable skills, yet there has been an unwillingness to set up and identify in the schools differentiated vocational curricula and certificates. Again,

the school has served as a *social elevator* and the status symbols of education (e.g., the high school diploma, the A.B. degree) have been highly respected. At the same time, the tendency has been to extend secondary and even higher education to more and more young people regardless of their ability, thus destroying the status symbols. See articles by George Z. F. Bereday: "Selective Education versus Education for All," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 58, January, 1957, pp. 198-206; "Intellect and Inequality in American Education," *Educational Record*, 39, 3 (July, 1958), pp. 202-12; "A Comparative Look at English, French, and Soviet Education," *Current History*, Vol. 35, September, 1958, pp. 165-71.

p. 123 "... school should be a happy place ..."

The notion that school can be happy has been challenged by some who have insisted that hard critical thinking is naturally distasteful to men. It is argued that effective education forces men to bring their most cherished beliefs before the bar of full critical inspection. This is a difficult and painful process; consequently, education must be distasteful. See Jacques Barzun, *Teacher in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945).

p. 124 "... policies of the public schools ..."

Scholarly characterizations of education in the United States interpreted in the context of the special features of contemporary American society are: I. L. Kandel, *American Education in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957) and George Z. F. Bereday and Luigi Volpelli, eds., *Public Education in America* (New York: Harper, 1958).



Religion,

Humanistic

Culture, and

Conservatism as

Theories of

Education

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# The Critique of the Schools by Humanistic Scholars

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED that the contemporary debate about what the schools should teach will go down in history as one of the great debates of American civilization.\* Others more skeptical have considered that perhaps it is primarily an argument among college professors in which the American public has little genuine interest. To be sure, college professors have been doing much of the writing and speaking, but the publication of their statements in the mass circulation periodicals, and the heated arguments over school policy in various local communities suggest that concern is not narrowly limited to the academic world.

Clearly, however, the college professors have recently been showing more general and more intense interest in the schools than they did during the period between the wars. Many of them are convinced that a decline in the American people's interest in and respect for the so-called "liberal studies" is due in large part to the theory and practice of the new education, which has de-emphasized the traditional liberal arts.

They deplore the growth of secular, scientific, naturalistic ideas in our society and maintain that many Americans are people lacking

an object in living—people without causes. They say that there is no principle of integrity at work in our lives—that the newest fad or fashion, whether in art, religion, or social thought, gains a following almost without its genuine importance or significance being evaluated. They claim that too many people are ready to surrender human values if at the moment it appears expedient to do so. It is said that Americans vacillate between a crude, selfish practicality and an unrealistic, sentimental idealism. Those who advance such critical judgments of American people place great blame upon the schools for what they judge to be a sad state of affairs. As they attribute to the schools the source of our difficulties, they examine the theories of education that have been at work in recent years.

## PRAGMATISM THE THEORY OF MODERN EDUCATION

Through the years of the New Deal and the Fair Deal in American politics, progressivism in American education held its own. Since the end of World War II, however, conservative ideas have been gaining more currency—in politics, in economics, in religion, in philosophy, and in education. In view of the appeal of conservative thought in all areas of American life since the war, it is certainly understandable that progressivism and pragmatism in American education have been under fire. Certainly in many ways progressivism and pragmatism in American education were educational corollaries of New Deal and Fair Deal "liberalism" in politics and economics.

Frequent reference to pragmatism is made in the literature of the public school controversy. Is pragmatism a satisfactory theory upon which to base the work of the schools? Or do we need to think of education in other terms? Shall we base the work of the schools on evolution, science, and social and economic democracy, the problems of the present? This the pragmatists apparently urged us to do. Or does this involve an educational

theory that is too secular, materialistic, contemporary, and lacking in moral and spiritual vitality?

Whether educational pragmatism means the child-centered school or educational experimentalism, progressive education built upon pragmatic theory remains vulnerable to critics who speak for myth, tradition, and religion as against naturalism. Pragmatism questions all absolutes. Words like *spirit, soul, mind, religion, God* appear infrequently in the professional vocabularies of the progressives, whether experimentalists or advocates of the child-centered school. Certainly the program is a this-worldly educational program, emphasizing problems of the here and now. Again, it is strongly equalitarian. The child-centered school romanticized equality; experimentalists attack social distinctions as based upon privilege rather than being empirically grounded distinctions.

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE SECULAR, MUNDANE ORIENTATION

Twentieth century public education has, in effect, broken with the fundamental philosophy upon which the traditional liberal arts were based. The public school has become a secular, this-worldly institution dedicated primarily to producing human beings who can cope with the demands of the workaday world of America. However, this has meant a corresponding de-emphasis of concerns that academic scholars have considered to be important, e.g., classic philosophy, literature, languages, and religion—those studies which, in customary college and university terminology, have been known as “the humanities.”

The humanistic studies—i.e., religion, classic philosophy, languages, and imaginative literature—have nearly passed from the scene in American public education. History has increasingly given way to social science; philosophy and religion are not taught as such; the classical languages have all but disappeared;

only the remnants of literature remain. Art and music, particularly the latter, are apparent exceptions, but art as art history has disappeared in favor of studio art as applied design, and a good deal of the emphasis in music seems to be motivated by conspicuous consumption—note the fantastic uniforms of the typical high school band.

While the importance of the humanities has declined, theoretically the schools have become dedicated to the production of minds in command of the method of scientific intelligence. Because good science and technology are not easily come by, nor are their disciplines easily taught, there have arisen charges of a pseudo-scientific mentality in the schools. We have been trying to teach the method of science as the intellectual method appropriate to a democratic, secular, open society; but we don't know how to do this well. The old humanistic school has been torn down; the new scientific technological school has its all too obvious weaknesses. This is the situation in the public elementary and high schools.

Now, while the same intellectual and cultural forces that have brought about the demise of the humanities in the public schools have been at work in higher education, the humanistic studies traditionally defined have, although threatened, remained relatively stronger in higher education. Thus at mid-century, two decades after Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, A. J. Nock, Norman Foerster, and the audacious Mr. Hutchins began the crusade to save the humanities from complete extinction, the battle is lustily joined, and joined properly. For the competent pragmatists in educational theory—Dewey, Peirce, Bode, Raup, Childs, *et al.*—had indeed developed a rationale for an education centered in the scientific technological mind rather than in the humanistic mind as traditionally conceived.

The public school controversy centers in a revolt of the humanistic scholars—philosophers, religionists, specialists in classical languages, literary men, and historians—against the scientific



technological emphasis in the schools. It may be that their revolt is, indeed, a last-ditch stand for the traditional humanistic studies in American education. The effort may be seen as an effort of literary scholars to preserve their disciplines in an age of overwhelming emphasis upon science and technology. They are supported by various individuals and groups in American culture to whom religion, philosophy, classical languages and literature, history, and art are of primary importance. It appears that at least one of the great foundations has adopted a policy of supporting them. They have succeeded in stating their case to the public not only in periodicals of restricted circulation such as *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and *The New Republic*, but also in those of mass circulation such as *Life*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Reader's Digest*. Through subsidization by a foundation, schemes for training teachers giving them more substantial grounding in the traditional humanistic studies are being tried out in various universities throughout the United States.\*

## THE LIBERAL ARTS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Academic scholars believe that the schools should modify their concern about the social and vocational adjustment of boys and girls and return to the emphasis upon basic intellectual skills to which they gave relatively more attention before the pragmatic view became so influential. The crudities and absence of intellectual design in our public schools are attacked. It is said that pragmatists must be rooted out of the teacher-training institutions to bring about improvement of the work of the schools. Naturalism and pragmatism are blamed for conditions in our educational institutions which they deplore.

Critics of the schools, anti-socialist intellectuals, and apostles of the new conservatism in politics and economics look with favor toward a renewed emphasis upon traditional humanistic

studies in the schools and colleges. The conservative movements in social, political, and economic thought have given added strength to advocates of the liberal arts in American education, that is, to those who would define liberal education as that which gives central place to the traditions of Western civilization.\* Thus Peter Viereck maintains, "The proper start for a new American conservatism, aiming not at success but truth . . . is in the world of literature, the arts and sciences, intellectual history, the universities, and the humanities."<sup>1</sup>

The school has identified training with education, so it is claimed. It has disregarded discipline. The burden of instruction has been shifted from the pupil, where it belongs, to the teacher. The school has attempted to popularize instruction, and the serious purpose of education has been lost. Schools are offering a choice of an immense number of subjects that are easily taught and readily accessible to inferior mentalities. There is too much emphasis upon vocational matters, science, living languages, and useful arts. So far as higher education is concerned, all that is left is the degree, which is pasted upon the student after a certain period of time like a factory or trade union label. The units of the educational system have been obliterated. At each level a little of everything is done; things are taught that should have been taught in earlier units, and there is dabbling with things that should be postponed until they can be treated responsibly.

The critics assert that schools today do not hold the intellectual development of students as their primary objective. There is frivolous and irrelevant material and too much specialization and vocationalism.\* Present-day problems are not those of earning a living or getting a trained labor force. They are the problems of what to do with our lives and how to organize society.

The humanist scholars claim that a division of labor should be preserved in the nurture of the young. The mind ought to be

1 Peter Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953), p. 248.

distinguished from the moral and the spiritual side of man. These latter should be the concern of family and church, while the school should be concerned primarily with the development of the intellectual powers of man. These agencies should work together, but schools should not attempt to take over the functions of family and church.

One reason for the popularity of Dewey's philosophy is that the education it proposed is relatively painless; thus, so it is said, the main reason for the popularity of progressive education is that children have a good time in school. It is true that men are different, but the fact that they are also alike is more important for educational work. Education, that is, should bring out our common humanity rather than our individuality, according to the proponents of the liberal arts.

A sound philosophy in general suggests that men are rational, moral, and spiritual beings and that the improvement of men means the fullest development of their rational, moral, and spiritual powers. All men have these powers, and all men should develop them to the fullest extent.<sup>2</sup>

## PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

An assessment of American culture and of Western civilization is involved in the judgments about education made by the literary humanistic scholars. An extremely pessimistic evaluation is provided by T. S. Eliot, throughout whose work runs the underlying theme that contemporary civilization is disintegrating. In *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* he proposes social and educational conditions for the survival of culture in the Western world. The meeting of such conditions might at least extend the lifetime of modern civilization, which may ultimately be doomed in any case.

For Eliot, culture is "that which makes life worth living." Thus defined, culture is a way of life, a religion lived; in this

<sup>2</sup> R. M. Hutchins, *The Conflict in Education in a Democratic Society* (New York: Harper, 1953), p. 86.

sense it is transmitted primarily through the family, not through the school.

Eliot's society would be headed by a hereditary aristocracy made up of savants in all fields. These members of an elite would be supported by the people, and would guide and direct the community as well as preserve and contribute to the culture. Education of the highest order would be for these elite individuals. They would be liberally educated in all fields of scholarship, and each would be a specialist in one of the arts or sciences. Thus, the evils which have resulted from the lowering of educational standards to educate too many may be ameliorated. Equality, for Eliot, is an impossibility; therefore, attempts to attain it are self-defeating. Culture, then, is to be preserved and extended by the gifted few who are to be liberally educated and then, perhaps, even subsidized by the masses for the role of special preservers of those things of greatest beauty and highest worth.

Albert Jay Nock, whose writings antedate the full-scale educational controversy of mid-century was similarly critical of equalitarian democracy and an educational program to preserve and extend it.

Nock claims that our educational system was founded on three false ideas—equality, democracy, and the literate society as the good society. Here, he argues, are the roots of our educational difficulties. Equality is a false ideal because not everyone is equal—not everyone is educable.

The philosophical doctrine of equality gives no more ground for the assumption that all men are educable than it does for the assumption that all men are six feet tall.<sup>8</sup>

Democracy is an inadequate educational ideal, for it reduces ideals to the level of the average man. Literacy as an ideal is false, for by itself the ability to read does not relate to wisdom in human affairs. In the light of these false ideals, we have attempted

<sup>8</sup> A. J. Nock, *Theory of Education in the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932), p. 44.

to educate all the people, but this can only pervert education, for the masses of men are ineducable. Only a few are educable; they are those who can profit from the study of Greek, Latin, and mathematics. The classical curriculum remains that most appropriate for the nurture of an intellectual elite.

Nock's proposals for change are not as drastic as his social analysis might suggest. He would have us continue much of the work done at present in schools, but would remove the label *education* from most of it. The difference between education and instruction or training must be recognized. Training for literacy should be continued, for although wisdom does not issue from this, there are advantages in having a literate citizenry. A genuine educational program for those who can profit from it must be developed.<sup>4</sup>

As for the educables, Nock would have us emulate European educational procedures. On the Continent there are fewer pseudo-equalitarian or pseudo-democratic notions. Educables are recognized as rare and valuable. The Continental system also does reasonably well by the ineducables. There is no romantic nonsense about their capacity. Training is given to those who will accept it.<sup>5</sup>

In the United States, suggests Nock, independent schools and colleges supported by private philanthropy might dedicate themselves to the selection and nurture of an intellectual elite, thus preserving true education.<sup>6</sup> However, he is apparently aware that support of such a notion on the part of the American public may be less than enthusiastic.

Robert Maynard Hutchins, who for many years has been a vigorous and able critic of educational modernism, apparently shares much of the Eliot-Nock point of view regarding the importance of an intellectual elite to insure the future of Western

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*, especially Chapters XII, XIII, XIV.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146-47.

civilization. But Hutchins would not curtail the freedom of the masses, nor has he advocated the sort of subsidy of the intellectuals recommended by Eliot. Neither does Hutchins draw a sharp line between the educables and the ineducables as does Nock. However, he does propose a fundamental reorganization of American education in the view that democracy's future depends upon a liberally educated leadership.

In Hutchins' book *University of Utopia*, published in 1953, a detailed plan for revising the educational system is presented. Since education is "a conversation aimed at truth," children should spend the first ten years of the school life learning the techniques of communication, that is, reading, writing, and arithmetic. Along with this should go study of great literature, history, and geography. A foreign language should be mastered; some study of science should be included, and there should be some emphasis upon appreciation of art and music. Hutchins maintains that subjects that depend upon experience should not be taught to the inexperienced; thus, children should not be involved in social studies programs that center in examination of current social problems. Their efforts to discuss such material will be superficial and ineffective because they do not have sufficient experience to understand the issues in depth.

At the age of 16 or earlier, according to Hutchins, the student passes into college. Here he continues to study the same subjects, but the emphasis shifts from learning how to communicate to developing familiarity with the leading ideas that have been developed by mankind. The appropriate method for the teaching in such a program is that centered upon discussion, criticism, questioning, and debate. The curriculum from early elementary school through college is designed by educators and allows no student electives. There is no credit system; when the student is ready, probably at about the age of 18, he takes examinations to determine whether he has acquired a liberal education. If he passes, the Bachelor of Arts degree is conferred.

After leaving college, he chooses one of two paths open to him. He may start to earn a living. If so, his education does not cease; he continues it in adult study groups all his life. On the other hand, after college he may enter the university where, if he is qualified, he may begin specialized study. However, only the occupations which have intellectual content are represented there, and all departments must be able to maintain conversation with one another.<sup>7</sup> The ideal university is responsible to no authority; it is a center of independent thought and must maintain complete academic freedom.

Hutchins makes a sharp distinction between the experimental sciences and the humanities; science has its own disciplines and methods of achieving results, but there are other methods of reaching truth. Historians, philosophers, and theologians have come to conclusions using disciplines other than those of science.<sup>8</sup> The supreme educational aim which all scholars hold in common, however, is the improvement of men as moral, spiritual, and political beings; this is to be achieved as the primary emphasis of all education remains intellectual.

A blend of dogmatism and desperate immediacy characterizes the social and educational judgments of literary humanistic scholars like Nock, Eliot, and Hutchins. These are men who speak as prophets, sensing immediate disaster if their warnings are not observed. As these thinkers forward educational criticisms and make proposals, it seems clear that battle lines are drawn, such that a major educational revolution is called for.

A somewhat more moderate position is developed by Gilbert Highet, according to whom a liberal curriculum is made up of the classics in their original form, religion, politics, art, history, sociology, and the sciences, in addition to reading, writing, manual arts, and shop. Such a liberal education is the answer to the

<sup>7</sup> R. M. Hutchins, *The University of Utopia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 59-61.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

challenge of preparing the population for the life and responsibilities it must assume. Men must have minds disciplined by the lessons of history to deal with life in our kind of society. This means a deep and complete study of the classics. A liberal curriculum, according to Highet, should include the study of all things that make up the history of man's life and thought. Everyone should have equal opportunity for such study, he insists. No differentiation should be made between rich and poor, but only as much vocational training may be included in the liberal curriculum as can be afforded after the more important work is thoroughly and carefully done. This more important work is that of achieving a general education based upon the classics.

Highet believes that the mind is man's director and most precious possession. Without a highly trained mind, man is not in any way the custodian of his own destiny. The ability to think, precisely and correctly, separates man from the rest of the animals. He holds that competition is a natural instinct of the young, and that it can, if properly directed and used, be a powerful educational asset. Tradition, he holds, can be a motivating power in educational work. It can offer encouragement in learning, provide a range of possibilities, instill a sense of order, impress the sense of responsibility, and constitute a challenge to the student. He believes that punishment is a stimulus to learning, and recommends repetition of work badly done as the punishment for poor work, and the loss of privileges as the punishment for misbehavior.

All people in all walks of life are teachers. The methods of these teachers are as varied as their jobs and characters, and they are all artists. In their work and in their speech—in their instructions to employees, and in the counsel which they give their friends—they are conveying what they believe.<sup>9</sup> Highet maintains that in Western civilization all modern teaching stems from two lines: the Greek teachers who claimed to follow reason, and

<sup>9</sup> Gilbert Highet, *The Art of Teaching* (New York: Knopf, 1950), p. 277.



the Hebrew prophets who knew that they were voicing the will of God for men.

We admire both, but we are apt to think that while a group of men who are in touch with God can change the world by a rare and miraculous intervention, it needs the steady work of reason to keep the place going and to train the young.<sup>10</sup>

Few if any modern public school systems in the United States could completely meet Highet's criteria. But note that Highet has a place for vocational education, that he insists that his outline of an educational scheme is appropriate for all men, and that he sees all men functioning in their various walks of life as artists and teachers.

Again, Alfred North Whitehead gives more quarter to educational modernism than do extreme traditionalists such as Nock, Eliot, and Hutchins. Whitehead's position is that education should produce a student with a creative mind and the ability to express his creative powers. In order to do this he must have a background, though introductory, in the technical side of education. Whitehead views as fatal the varied disconnected subjects offered in the schools of England and advances the proposal that all subjects in the modern curriculum should be aimed to prepare the student to meet and understand life, its connections in the past, present, and future, and all its manifestations.

The antithesis between a technical and a liberal education is fallacious. There can be no adequate technical education which is not liberal and no liberal education which is not technical: that is, no education which does not impart both technique and intellectual vision.<sup>11</sup>

There are three branches of education—liberal, technical, and scientific. He insists that the three cannot be taught as separate entities, but that each has a different method, and that the difference in the methods must be clearly recognized. Any subject

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174-75.

<sup>11</sup> A. N. Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 63.

matter may be treated in the aspect of man's quest for understanding and the good life and thus be liberal. It may also be investigated scientifically with a view to precise understanding of its elements and prediction of its course. Finally it may be viewed as contributing to the enterprise of living and the construction of material, social, and ideal artifacts for coping with existence.<sup>12</sup>

As Whitehead sees it, a liberal education is one that stimulates the processes of thought as well as an aesthetic appreciation. Such an education should include an understanding and knowledge of the masterpieces of thought, of imaginative literature, and of art. In the present scheme of life, a program of education in any one of the three main divisions must include elements of the other two, while the emphasis is placed on the one that the student has chosen as his main interest.

Thus, all forms of education must be seen in their liberal, scientific, and technical dimensions. This way certain characteristic oppositions and tensions that have divided the fields of knowledge and scholarship are seen to be false.<sup>13</sup>

Because of lack of time, each curriculum cannot be fully developed, and there must always be a dominant emphasis. However, the dominant emphasis is never the exclusive emphasis, and it is always held in mind that the emphasis dominating at a given time and place is not the only possible one. A purely liberal education is an aristocratic education and one that implies leisure time. The man fully liberated by education would indeed be the universal man—linguist, historian, savant of art and literature, and familiar with the great philosophies.<sup>14</sup> Such an education, observes Professor Whitehead, spans an entire lifetime and even then cannot be fully completed; therefore, in practice, liberal education is selective.

Finally, there are a few literary humanistic scholars who have taken direct issue with the Hutchins-Nock-Eliot position and

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

have cast recommendations for school policy in such form that sober educational modernists can entertain them with considerable sympathy if not with complete agreement. Such a literary humanist is Professor Howard Mumford Jones.

Jones opposes the Roman Catholic philosophy of education that supremely important truth is revealed in the dogmas of the church, and that new ideas in education are unacceptable if they conflict with revelation. Again, he opposes the conception of a preferred reading list—the view that if the student reads the classics he is educated. While this method has the value of simplicity and thoroughness, Jones believes that it is a return to the medieval university and the seven major divisions of learning, that it ignores the importance of vocational training and produces dialecticians. Furthermore, he disapproves of the traditionalists who would make the supreme purpose of the school that of imparting a sense of the unity of Western culture. He questions the assumption that Western culture is or should be the model for all thought.

Jones believes that we are living in a scientific world dominated by non-scientists, and this tends to draw apart the sciences and the humanities. Nevertheless, humanistic scholars have attempted to adapt scientific methods to their work.<sup>15</sup> However, Jones maintains that the remedy is not to make the humanities scientific. Instead, he calls for understanding of the sciences and their place in the world, along with an acceptance of values in the humanities other than the empirical ones. He proposes a new plan for liberal education involving the following major principles:

- 1) Professional or vocational training for all
- 2) The study of the theory of science and of the application of scientific discoveries to our technology

<sup>15</sup> Howard Mumford Jones, *Education and World Tragedy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), p. 50.

- 3) The assumptions and workings of representative government, particularly in the United States and in the British Commonwealth of Nations
- 4) The study of Russia
- 5) The study of the Orient
- 6) The study of personal relationships in modern society.<sup>14</sup>

In the study of science there must not only be the explanation of a steam engine but also the analysis of the social implications of this invention. The history to be taught in this program would originate in present problems to give it meaning. It is not appropriate to place the teaching of Western civilization foremost, since neither does the degree to which the Western nations actually practice their traditions in world affairs nor the actual importance of so-called "Western traditions" in the world substantiate their alleged centrality. Russia and the Orient are important because of their significant roles in world affairs, and by virtue of the very number of people involved. Personal relationships are important because we live in a world of fear where man must learn to have confidence in his fellow man.

### *Summary*

The purpose of this chapter has been to indicate the form taken by critical assessments of the work of the schools on the part of reputable humanistic scholars. Their arguments, cited in preceding pages, join issues in varying degrees with the theory and practice that is deemed to be dominant in contemporary education.

The most influential theory in the work of American schools since 1900 has been ostensibly grounded in pragmatic thought, particularly the philosophical and educational doctrines of John Dewey. At the level of actual school practice, however, romanticized, distorted expressions of pragmatic educational theory have been popular. The individualistic "child-centered" emphasis in progressive education has been more widely applied in educational practice than the version of Dewey's thought known as experimentalism. But whether

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

pragmatic educational theory be taken to mean the child-centered activity school or the emphasis upon critical intelligence and the scientific method advocated by the experimentalists, it remains vulnerable to criticism by those who find in religion and the humanities indispensable sources of wisdom.

Humanistic scholars object to the extreme concern in modern schools with the vocational and social adjustment of young people, the absence of intellectual design in the work of schools, and the lack of respect for intellectuals and the work of the mind, which they think is prevalent. They are critical of the efforts to popularize education and consider that children and young people have mistakenly been led to believe that learning can always be pleasant and need never be painful. Despite the emphasis upon individual differences in modern schools, humanistic scholars consider that educators have failed to deal realistically with the fact that not all young people have the same capacity for education. This is partly because they have not seen that the primary function of education is to provide intellectual discipline. Confusion about the real purpose of education has resulted in a tendency for schools to take over guidance functions which properly belong to other social institutions, such as the family and the church. Finally, they are critical of the tendency of modern schools to treat science and the scientific method as if they were appropriate to all fields and to all sorts of problems. They consider that the scientific method cannot be applied to the humanistic fields, and they doubt the possibility of a scientific kind of social and economic planning.

As literary humanistic scholars forward positive proposals for education, they consistently advocate recognition in educational programs of intellectual methods and criteria in humanistic studies which are somehow different from those of experimental science and unique to the humanities. Every school program must exhibit intellectual design; thus, the liberty of students to elect various courses must be curtailed. The school program that is appropriately designed will recognize distinctions among liberal, technical, and scientific studies. Central emphasis should be given to the basic intellectual skills, and relatively more attention must be given to the literary humanistic fields, in view of the strong tendency of American education to overemphasize the technical and the scientific. The classics and history should receive more emphasis, particularly social

and intellectual history of various cultures, with special emphasis upon Western civilization. The school regimen should be more demanding. Special educational opportunities for gifted and able students should be provided, and poor work should be recognized as such, perhaps with appropriate penalties and punishments attached. Schools and the society at large must recognize, respect, and reward intellectual achievement.

### Notes

- p. 130 ". . . the contemporary debate about . . . the schools . . . as one of the great debates of American civilization . . ."  
C. Scott Fletcher, President, The Fund for Adult Education, maintained in an address in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, that the controversy regarding the schools of the mid-twentieth century is one of the great debates in American history. Comparing the current discussion regarding American education with those having to do with national policy in the late eighteenth century, the Civil War, and the two world wars, Fletcher asserts that the school controversy is even more crucial. For educational policy involves the total future of a people. See C. Scott Fletcher. *The Battle of the Curriculum* (White Plains, N.Y.: The Fund for Adult Education, 1958).
- p. 131 ". . . schemes for training teachers giving them more substantial grounding in the traditional humanistic studies . . ."  
A report describing the programs sponsored by the Fund for the Advancement of Education, along with a statement of the basic rationale was published in 1957. See Paul Woodring. *New Directions in Teacher Education* (New York: Fund for the Advancement of Education, 1957).
- p. 155 "The conservative movements in social, political, and economic thought have given added strength to the advocates of the liberal arts in American education . . ."  
The view that the new education in the public schools is an expression of the social, political, and economic liberalism of the years between World War I and World War II has been expressed rather frequently by interpreters of the pro-

gressive movement. Pragmatism, which was the philosophy of the new education, has been called the philosophy which is a unique expression of the American temper. The political principles of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the legal theory of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and the economics of the various followers of John Maynard Keynes have been viewed as inspired by the same basic ideals as those at work in the new education. Thus, "New Deal liberalism" was supported by intellectuals and labor, and the New Deal political bloc was the sort of collaboration of labor and scholarship which has frequently been seen in the world's history in support of liberal-humanitarian movements. At mid-century, however, the sober and responsible attack on the schools seems to be one in which the intellectuals and middle-class professionals have joined, but there is little evidence that labor joins in the attack. Thus, it might be suggested that the intellectuals, who joined with labor to support the political and economic liberalism of the 'thirties and 'forties, have now joined the middle-class professionals in a crusade for a form of educational conservatism. The suggestion is, then, that the schools have lost the support of the liberal intellectuals but not the support of the American working people.

- p. 135 "*. . . frivolous and irrelevant material, and too much specialization and vocationalism.*"

Pasadena, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Cleveland, New York City are among the school systems in which, during the 'fifties, special lay movements to inspect, criticize, and propose changes in school policy and program have been in evidence. Charges of frivolity, time-wasting, and vocationalism have been heard in these investigations.

## CHAPTER NINE

# The Critique of the Schools by Religious Leaders

NOT ALL LITERARY HUMANISTS who advocate greater emphasis on the liberal arts in our schools are equally sympathetic toward organized religion and formalized religious dogma. As they see it, however, they are more sympathetic toward ideas and ideals, toward spiritual and aesthetic dimensions in education, and toward supernatural religion than are the pragmatic liberals. Even non-dogmatic, liberal Christianity and Judaism insist upon a conception of God and a conception of ethical truths as somehow transcending the biological and social realms. From the other side, in recent years there have been those with a fundamentally scientific and experimental outlook who have nevertheless insisted that the function of the public school cannot be completely expressed in a secular theory. They have made the judgment that science, although of central importance, is not the whole life, and that certain vital truths and values cannot be subsumed under scientific method and outlook. Finally, they have urged that science be supplemented by some sort of religious faith, in particular that democratic institutions rooted in social traditions need such support. Those springs of deep loyalty which make for social



solidarity, so they have reasoned, cannot be fed by a naturalistic, secular education.

### SPOKESMEN NOT SECTARIAN

Such criticisms and proposals come from some who view religion as myth or poetry and do not grant an authoritative role to tradition. F. Ernest Johnson, Robert MacIver, E. E. Aubrey, Luther Weigle, Pitirim Sorokin, and Henry Pitt Van Dusen, if traditionalists, are scarcely in the same camp as Jacques Maritain and Mortimer Adler. George S. Counts, nominally an experimentalist, has advised teachers to commit themselves to the fundamental values of the Judaic-Christian tradition.<sup>1</sup> Literary men like Van Wyck Brooks and Waldo Frank, philosophers such as T. M. Greene and Whitney J. Oates, and even an occasional philosopher of education like Robert Ulich use the word *spiritual* to refer to values they think are lacking in our strongly materialistic society and in our secular public schools.<sup>2</sup> They argue that people need spiritual values to which they can dedicate themselves. They suggest that such spiritual values make up the core of a living culture, by consecration to which people can achieve poise and inner strength. Spiritual values provide bonds between people which inspire loyalty and cooperation. Moreover, as they see it, the spiritual problems of our day cannot be dealt with scientifically. The methods of the natural sciences are not appro-

<sup>1</sup> George S. Counts, *Education and the Promise of America* (New York: Macmillan, 1913).

<sup>2</sup> Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919); Van Wyck Brooks, *Letters and Leadership* (New York: Huebsch, 1918); J. Douglas Brown, Theodore M. Greene, Whitney J. Oates and others, "The Spiritual Basis of Democracy," in *Science, Philosophy, and Religion, Second Symposium, Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion in their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life* (New York: The Conference, 1912), pp. 251-57; Robert Ulich, *Fundamentals of Democratic Education* (New York: American Book, 1919); Ulich, *The Human Career* (New York: Harper, 1935).

priate for dealing with them, for spiritual life and its laws are distinctive.<sup>3</sup>

The trouble with the experimental method of the natural sciences, so the argument runs, is that it is always partial and specialized. It devotes itself to narrow little problems. However, spiritual values and spiritual experiences link us with the whole. Spiritual life might even be defined as man's capacity to feel life as a whole. This is the power which modern Americans, in contrast to the pioneers, have allowed to languish for lack of nurture, claims Waldo Frank.<sup>4</sup>

There is the implication in the arguments of these writers now under consideration that modern scientific naturalism ignores the reality of evil in human experience. They hold that there is something real and distinctive in what they call spiritual life, and that a prime object in living must be the effort to overcome our temptations to evil through realization of or participation in the ultimate, intrinsic spiritual values. Thus, a condition of healthy self-control and self-direction is involved in recognition of the spiritual dimension of life. Evil consists in actualizing one potentiality in opposition to the full stream of nature. Good involves successfully harmonizing and tempering all desires in line with the proper nature of man. We are prone to evil or sin. This means that from time to time we fail to live up to our responsibilities for supporting the productive, creative, good energies of the universe.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to understand that the critics discussed here make no reference to sectarian religion in the precise sense.\* Rather, they have in mind a way of thinking about human nature and the societies in which people mature. Their effort is to call to attention certain dimensions, phases, or factors of living that are not treated by scientific naturalism.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, Greene, Oates *et al.*, "The Spiritual Basis of Democracy," p. 251.

<sup>4</sup> Waldo Frank, *Our America*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-37.

## STANDARDS IMPORTANT FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

Directing his discussion specifically to educational work in America, Professor Ulich, whom we have cited above, criticizes the use of the terms *growth* and *adjustment* in professional educational writings. As he sees it, the very ideas of growth and adjustment are meaningless unless man is in some way regarded as participating in a purposeful plan for the world. If the slogan "education as growth" means anything, it means faith that enables men to find constructive ways of dealing with the conflicts within our world. In this view, man is an ethical as well as a physical and social being, and true educational growth must include growth in discovering and understanding criteria or standards to be used in making moral choices.<sup>6</sup> These criteria or standards, Ulich thinks, are to be discovered within the nature of being itself as man reflects upon nature and his place in it. That is, if men try, they are ultimately able to find truth.

How man became able to reach beneath the surface of ever-changing appearances into the "deeper dimensions of being" where these criteria are discoverable is probably his greatest secret. There is only one hypothesis possible . . . that man is able to reflect upon nature and in so doing reaches with his mind into the vital sources of all existence.<sup>7</sup>

As Ulich sees it, human freedom, then, can only be achieved as man identifies himself with the deeper meaning of the universe. Religious faith affirms the connection of man's deepest insights with the universal *logos*. Thus, religious faith completes and confirms the significance of man's efforts to gain poise and self-control.<sup>8</sup> It follows, then, in Ulich's argument, that an education that fails to emphasize this deeper ethical, moral dimension—that fails to build a firm foundation for faith in the moral dignity of man—leads toward barbarism. Unless scientific

<sup>6</sup> Ulich, *Fundamentals of Democratic Education*, p. 148.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 275 ff.

methods operate within a structure of transcendent values, science can contribute as much to man's degradation as to his elevation. Civilization depends upon firm, unyielding commitment to certain unchangeable moral standards seen as eternal in the structure of the universe.

... scientific methods cannot be used too much, but unless they are embedded in a meaningful general interpretation of man's role in the world they may be as easily used for his degradation as for his elevation, for destruction as well as construction.<sup>9</sup>

A sound program of general education, maintains Professor Ulich, must at least open the way for religious faith by instilling an attitude of reverence toward the greatness of the universe and man's place in it. Faith is essential to the development of poise and culture by the individual. Faith as well as reason is necessary if efforts to be reasonable about the universe are to be rewarded. To be sure, dogmatic, unexamined faith is sterile. It is a synthesis of faith and reason that is needed for great education.<sup>10</sup>

Turning from Ulich to Mark Van Doren, poet and professor of English at Columbia University, we see a similar concern about the importance of order and unity in educational work. He maintains, like Ulich, that education can be coherent and meaningful only as its practices are directed by clear conceptions about the ends of life. Absence of intellectual design in education is intolerable. Education with an intellectual design may be liberating.<sup>11</sup> There must be some center or unifying principle for a school curriculum, for the purpose of the various school studies is to create or construct an organized world-view.<sup>12</sup> Such a result is that to which liberal education must aspire. The unified view of man, his world and his destiny, thus provided, gives peace and inner strength to men.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Van Doren, *Liberal Education* (New York: Holt, 1943), pp. 10-11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

This theme is also developed by Professor T. M. Greene, a philosopher. He argues that our greatest need today is for order, unity, and coherence in our intellectual life. The ultimate goal of liberal education is to provide a historical and philosophical context and interpretation for empirical data.<sup>13</sup>

### SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION

Some of the arguments already mentioned of the religious critics of pragmatism and naturalism have centered around the importance of transcendent ideals to give individuals strength in adversity, poise in the face of conflict, and inner peace and integrity in difficult times. The needs of individual human beings have been the center of concern. There has also been the suggestion, however, that some supra-scientific values and ideals must be maintained to keep society from falling apart. Democracy, cut loose from spiritual and religious moorings as it has been since the seventeenth century, is in danger of becoming sheer sentimentalism. Thus it is argued, there must be some religious or philosophical reason for respecting human personality.<sup>14</sup> Because democracy is an ethical principle, and essentially that stated in the Christian "golden rule,"<sup>15</sup> it can only be preserved as men are somehow united in a kind of religious faith. The suggestion is that democracy must be based on certain absolute moral categories; the view is that democracy presupposes commitment to certain values. Despite our differences, it is argued that we can unite in a common faith in some supreme unity—a faith that there is something bigger than our differences. Only thus, it is suggested, may our society have strong internal unity but at the

<sup>13</sup> T. M. Greene, "Introduction," in *The Meaning of the Humanities*, ed. T. M. Greene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1933), pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>14</sup> E. E. Aubrey, "Science, Religion, and Democracy," in *Science, Philosophy, and Religion, A Symposium, Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion in their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life* (New York: The Conference, 1911), p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Luther A. Weigle, "The Religious Background of Democracy," in *Science, Philosophy, and Religion, Second Symposium*, p. 541.

same time tolerate differences. A ground, then, of the democratic open society is the faith that contrasting and competing ways represent man's finite insights into the greater unity of which the diversities are expressions.<sup>16</sup> They represent the unfolding of the Absolute or, as some would put it, of God. Apparent antagonisms are phases in the development of a divine plan.<sup>17</sup>

Alexander Meiklejohn says that in an earlier day theology gave meaning to life and education, and provided a solid core of ethical values for intelligent living.<sup>18</sup> Van Wyck Brooks speaks of the common background belonging to Americans as people nurtured in the Western religions. Thus, he specifies that the unifying faith for our day is belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man—the common faith upon which twentieth century citizens of the Western world can unite.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, T. M. Greene makes reference to the Greek and Hebrew-Christian tradition as sources of unifying concepts for our culture.<sup>20</sup> Mortimer Adler maintains that our beliefs in natural rights and the dignity of man can only be justified on the basis of philosophy and religion. Democracy means guarantees of certain rights to all men, but there are no such rights unless there is a permanent structure of natural law which maintains them. Moreover, there is no justification for belief in man's dignity except as it is held that man is a rational animal, distinct from the brutes because of his spiritual nature. Thus, democracy depends upon religion.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Robert MacIver, "The Nature of the Challenge," in *Science, Philosophy, and Religion* (1941), pp. 86-87.

<sup>17</sup> P. A. Sorokin, "The Tragic Dualism of Contemporary Sensate Culture: Its Root and Way Out," in *Science, Philosophy, and Religion* (1941), p. 116.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Meiklejohn, *Education between Two Worlds* (New York: Harper, 1942), pp. 71 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Van Wyck Brooks, "Reasons for the Conference," in *Science, Philosophy, and Religion* (1941), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, Greene, Oates et al., "The Spiritual Basis for Democracy," p. 255.

<sup>21</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, "God and the Professors," in *Science, Philosophy, and Religion* (1941), p. 136.

Gordon Keith Chalmers makes reference to the "self-evident truths" inextricably bound up with religious dogma.<sup>22</sup> He asserts that these timeless virtues are active and lively forces, not merely holy relics, and that pragmatism by virtue of its methods of dealing with experience, perforce refrains from reliance on religious dogma. The preoccupation of contemporary pragmatic educators with social reforms has diverted attention away from the traditional educational tasks of converting the reason and developing a critical knowledge of the nature of the individual man.<sup>23</sup> A central weakness of the American school, says Chalmers, is its preoccupation with group behavior. Thus, education as practiced today is not so much an art or a science as it is a social technique. It is concerned not with human values but rather with political, economic, and institutional values and how they affect not one individual but many individuals collected together.<sup>24</sup> He suggests that American education has given too much attention to the conditioning of attitudes and not enough to the development of reason.<sup>25</sup>

### CHANGES IN EDUCATION DEMANDED

When American education chooses to dedicate itself to reason, four definite changes will result, claims Chalmers. First, there will be a revived respect for the study of language and literature; second, teacher-training institutions will substitute for techniques of teaching a greater knowledge of subject matter being taught; third, the strictly technical and escapist studies of art and letters will be interpreted realistically as peripheral and not central to human study; and fourth, immediate social problems will be distinguished from the more fundamental problem of

<sup>22</sup> Gordon Keith Chalmers, *The Republic and the Person* (Chicago: Regnery, 1952), p. 6, also Chapters XII, XIII.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 233-34, 236.

knowing what actually are the elements and qualities of human nature.<sup>26</sup>

Chalmers unequivocally states that it has been John Dewey's philosophy and its application by his adherents which is responsible for our present emphasis in education.<sup>27</sup> He attacks Dewey's pragmatism for its emphasis on means and not ends, and asserts that modern education is concerned with ways and means, with know-how but not with consequences. Chalmers insists that a pragmatic outlook is not an adequate basis for a strong political liberalism.<sup>28</sup> He objects to claims that the social reforms involved in the period of the New Deal were products of pragmatic liberalism and maintains, rather, that the social Christian teachings of the schools and colleges were the creative intellectual sources of these achievements.<sup>29</sup> A realistic and defensible liberalism, claims Chalmers, involves the concept that men are not celestial beings but capable of evil as well as good. A political liberalism based upon such a view can face totalitarianism with a steeled mind and will as well as armaments.

The liberal curriculum with its emphasis upon languages and literature, music, poetry, and the visual arts has been seriously shaken by the onslaught of vocationalism in American education, according to Chalmers. He believes, further, that the humanities are frequently regarded as luxuries and taken only by students who have not yet decided upon a definite career. That American schools have produced vast numbers of technicians is laudable, indeed, but if these technicians were also individuals learned in arts and letters, our national safety would be more secure. Supported by a school curriculum in the name of life adjustment and by vocational counseling and training, "preparation for occupation" receives too much emphasis in modern schools. Progressive education does not give sufficient attention

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 252-53.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220 ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 14 ff., 27-28.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter XIII.



to the need for understanding the nature of man and developing ethical judgment. The latter emphasis is needed in work with all students, not with only the gifted few who may become scholars in the humanistic fields.

Schools of education do not, by virtue of their underlying philosophy and objectives, produce the desirable teacher.<sup>30</sup> Chalmers regards the successful teacher as one who is so dedicated to his subject, so absorbed in it and moved by it, that he is not aware of means or methods. Modern education does not achieve true growth principally because it is devoted to reducing things, ideas, and experience to measurable quantities. The result of this kind of instruction is that abstractions are drawn which substitute for faith. It is pointed out that faith, which is necessary for growth, grows out of love and not discourse or argument; but this affection for the things and people of the world can be developed and disciplined. That is, love out of which grows faith can be deliberately cultivated in a humane educational program.

Thus, teaching that is preoccupied with an abstract, statistical account of man and life is guilty of being irreligious. The teacher should lead his students to see things beyond their physical attributes. This, in turn, implies two fundamental characteristics of the liberal arts point of view: first, that authority is vested in the teacher; second, that there is a spiritual element in life which cannot be ignored. Therefore, the secular school cannot be countenanced, chiefly because true learning and understanding of man and his world cannot take place unless there is an acknowledgment that the elements in human experience are inextricably bound up with a higher intelligence.<sup>31</sup> The study of theology should be revived in the universities.

The philosophy of pragmatism is found wanting by Chalmers in view of its failure to recognize the importance of ends, and

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

its failure to provide a basis for respect for the dignity of the individual. Because of its failure to embrace age-old ethical systems conceived for the express purpose of attaining a more perceptive understanding of the nature of man, pragmatism belittles man and minimizes his innate preciousness and value.<sup>22</sup> In its application to education, pragmatism has placed the pupil and his social development at the center of instructional procedure, and subject matter at the rim. The true philosophy is one that provides the individual with a grasp of mankind which lies beyond man's physical substance. It reveres the kinship of ideas, past and present, and furnishes man an identification with other men, respecting the inner law for man vitalized by conscience.<sup>23</sup>

## SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE RE-EXAMINED

Finally, regarding the relationship between church and state, Chalmers insists that if man is to survive, there must not be a separation but, rather, a closer relationship between the two.<sup>24</sup> When education is invigorated by the humanistic studies which equip students with an awareness and appreciation of intangible human values, it follows then that we introduce in our social and political relationships something of the quality of religion.

Henry Pitt Van Dusen\* asserts that modern public education has come to be grounded in a secular philosophy, with religion no longer the cornerstone but a stone among many.<sup>25</sup> Most schools today, Dr. Van Dusen states, have no definite philosophy of the relationship of truth to God. Fundamental religious influence is lacking. Few educational leaders know what they are

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter XIII.

<sup>25</sup> Henry P. Van Dusen, *God in Education* (New York: Scribners, 1951), pp. 51 ff., 67-68.

striving for in terms of ultimate human values. The vital postulates upon which Christianity and democracy rest are daily undermined in the classroom.<sup>86</sup> However, Van Dusen asserts that there is some contemporary evidence of a countertrend. A new interest in departments of religion in schools and colleges is seen. There is a trend away from specialization and free election toward a more adequate distribution of study programs. As schools and colleges take increasing responsibility in designing programs of liberal education, greater attention is being given to the role of religion in the education of free men.

Van Dusen discusses the apparently differing emphases between religion as a specialized study, and religion in general education and as a point of view or outlook which might influence all educational work. Both emphases are sound and should be welcomed by educational leaders. That is, religion should influence all departments and grow in importance as a specialized study, at the same time. The university cannot ignore God, but must provide a place for Him. The principle of separation of church and state does not mean that there can be no moral and spiritual influence in state institutions of education. He cites the use of the "agreed syllabi," formulated cooperatively by various religious groups in Great Britain for English schools.<sup>87</sup>

Van Dusen's philosophical position is that man is essentially a spiritual being and that truth is accessible to man. Thus, religion, or a knowledge of God, must become the queen of the sciences and the center of all truth. To the contrary, contemporary education does not so much involve a repudiation of belief in God as it does an attitude far more deadly. It simply ignores Him.<sup>88</sup> In his view, therefore, the issue becomes that of truth itself. Truth, to be sought and preserved, must be seen as originating from a high sovereign—God. We must reaffirm the organic unity of truth and of all knowledge, the interdependence

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83 ff.

of man and society, and the sustaining reality of God as the source of universal order.

Van Dusen criticizes the decision of the United States Supreme Court dealing with the McCollum "released time" case, and the interpretation by the Court of the doctrine of separation of church and state.

The theory of "a wall of separation between church and state" as currently propounded, far from being a perpetuation of the national tradition, represents a novel innovation in direct contradiction to the conviction our forebears and the established habits of the nation.<sup>39</sup>

Separation of church and state, then, does not mean that the state should not support any religion, but only that it will not give preference to any religion or denomination. Sectarianism is seen as a contributing factor in the progressive secularization of education in our country. The three major faiths have failed to join forces in a united philosophy of religiously oriented learning.\*

As Van Dusen sees it, there must be unqualified acceptance of the tested results of modern science and its enrichment of human experience. However, the scientific outlook focuses attention upon those aspects of human experience with which science is prepared to cope, and the denial or neglect of those aspects that escape scientific instruments. He calls for a restatement of the philosophy of education for American schools and colleges.

What is required is . . . the recovery of the inherent principles which guided and empowered "the great tradition" . . . the reaffirmation of the organic unity of Truth, and therefore of true knowledge; of the inter-relatedness in interdependence of the individual and society, of man and Nature, of the world and God, of this life and the life Beyond; the worth of tradition as the bearer of accumulated truth and, therefore, the principal begetter of sound advance; above all—the genetic and sovereign principle of the Hebraic-Hellenic-Christian tradition—the restoration of religion to a position of necessary and unchallenged centrality, and the ac-

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

knowledge of the reality and regnancy of the Living God as the foundation of both learning and life.<sup>40</sup>

Jacques Maritain, the eminent Roman Catholic philosopher, specifies the spiritual conception of man as that derived from Greek and Hebrew-Christian sources, and reminds Americans that under totalitarian regimes during World War II these had been systematically undermined. For Maritain, education must base its procedures on a definition of man which recognizes his place in a divinely ordained world-scheme. According to the Christian conception, man is an animal endowed with reason, whose supreme dignity is the intellect. He is a free individual in personal relation with God, and his righteousness consists in voluntarily obeying the law of God. He is sinful, but he is called to divine life and the freedom of grace. As a sinful creature he has his supreme perfection in love.<sup>41</sup> All of man's activities—his total nature and destiny—are within this pattern. Education must be organized so that each activity will be related directly or indirectly to this Christian conception of man. This is why the highest animating center of the university, which crowns the hierarchy of educational institutions, is a group of metaphysical and theological studies.<sup>42</sup>

Etienne Gilson, another Catholic philosopher highly respected outside and inside the Roman Catholic Church, explained that the thirteenth century represented a kind of spiritual unity which has been lost in the twentieth century. The Holy Roman Empire was an ideal rather than a concrete reality, and men who called themselves Christians did not always exemplify Christian virtues in their lives. Whether they observed them or not, however, they believed in them and recognized their authority even

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

while violating them. They believed that there was an absolute system of truth, goodness, and justice. The point is that in the thirteenth century there were certain commonly held beliefs about the nature of the universe, the nature of man, and man's destiny, upon which all agreed.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the thirteenth century appears to offer an escape from the ideological confusion of the twentieth century, and there is the move to initiate a conscious campaign to re-create through education in the twentieth century the medieval unity. The Chicago-St. John's movement in college education was sponsored by lay educators who shared to a considerable degree the philosophical orientation represented by Maritain and Gilson. The tendency of secular men of letters to view the movement sympathetically is understandable. Not the Bible alone, nor the Roman Catholic Church, but the "Western Intellectual Tradition" becomes the source of authority; from the great books we derive those insights that give order and unity to personal and social life—those insights that constitute the intellectual core of liberal education.

The interests of those concerned with introducing a formalized religious dimension into public education have been expressed by F. Ernest Johnson, a professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University during the years when naturalism and progressive education were at the height of their popularity. Johnson sees a dangerous tendency toward disintegration in our culture, and a weakening of the very foundations of the democratic way of life. This is because our society has become strongly secular, and a major reason for this has been the secularization of our public school system. Thus, as Johnson sees it, the divorcement between religion and education is a basic defect in American life.<sup>44</sup> Religion, insists Johnson, must be re-joined with edu-

<sup>43</sup> Etienne Gilson, *Medieval Universalism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937), pp. 11-12.

<sup>44</sup> F. Ernest Johnson, "Religion and the Philosophy of Education," in *Science, Philosophy and Religion* (1941), pp. 346 ff.

cation. Education—public education—must have a religious foundation. Those eternal principles that give order and meaning to life, produce integrated, cultured persons, and provide a unified, harmonious, designed educational program are to be found in the Greek and Hebrew-Christian tradition. Democracy itself can only be preserved as we unite in a religious faith that has its common roots in Judaism and Christianity. Democracy presupposes commitment to values expressed in this tradition.

### *Summary*

Religious scholars join with other literary humanists in deploring the absence of intellectual design in the work of schools; the degree to which life adjustment and vocational preparation are stressed at the expense of cultural studies; and an emphasis upon the scientific method as if it were the only intellectual method. They are also critical of efforts to reduce education to measurable quantities so as to apply experimental methods of research to pedagogic problems.

They consider that public education has been grounded in a secular philosophy and that the public school system has been effectively secularized. Thus, there has developed an enormous concern about growth and development of pupils, group behavior, the social development of pupils, and social reform. Education, that is, has come to be looked upon as a kind of social technique. But the concentration upon methods or means has been so intense that the effort to fix upon and define the proper ends of individual and social growth has been dissipated. This has been largely due to the influence of John Dewey and his adherents.

The schools, then, operating in the influence of a secular, naturalistic philosophy of education, have failed to take religion seriously and have thus failed to recognize the philosophical and religious foundation of moral and spiritual values. With the failure to teach religion in the schools, a stumbling block has been made of the separation of church and state.\* Ostensibly supported by the separation argument, there has occurred a most unfortunate divorcement between religion and education. Thus, there is no longer any intellectual ground in the secularized school for teaching respect for the dignity of the individual, for cultivating the virtues of faith and love, and

for emphasizing the importance of man's perennial struggle against evil, which is an inescapable element in human nature and in all human affairs.

The religious scholars would have the schools give special attention to the study of Western intellectual tradition, in which Judaism and Christianity have played such a basic part. It must be recognized that the cultivation of reason, the search for truth, and the search for God are the same enterprise; this is the enterprise to which the school should pre-eminently be dedicated.

An attitude of reverence for man and the universe, and a unified view of man, his world, and the ends of life should guide the work of the school and provide the criteria for making moral and educational judgments. A closer relationship between church and state is desirable; religion should be taught in the schools, and the study of theology should be revived in the universities. Values transcending those of science will thus be recognized, and the reality and importance of spiritual values will be readily accepted. With teachers in the schools committed to the Judaic-Christian tradition, belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man will be fostered. Although they will be seen as creatures capable of evil as well as good, men will also be viewed as spiritual beings distinct from the animals, not to be understood completely in terms of biological, psychological, and sociological explanation. Love will be cultivated in schools in the recognition that faith grows out of love.

### Notes

- p. 152 "*. . . critics discussed here make no reference to sectarian religion in the precise sense.*"

The discussion and analysis in this chapter is limited primarily to non-sectarian religious thinkers. This is not to imply that the positions taken on religion and education by sectarian thinkers is unimportant, but, rather, that groups such as the Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Seventh Day Adventist demonstrate in practice clear and unequivocal positions. Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Seventh Day Adventists have demonstrated, by setting up at great expense systems of church schools voluntarily supported, that they believe education must be sponsored by the churches. See



Helen R. Spaulding, "Statistical Trends in Religious Education," *Religious Education*, January-February, 1953, pp. 44-49.

p. 160 "*Henry Pitt Van Dusen . . .*"

The major Protestant denominations, long considered by educationists to be supporters of public education (e.g., Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, etc.), have become increasingly critical of the secular public schools. Henry Pitt Van Dusen is a leader among such so-called liberal Protestants. The position of this important and very large group of Christians on educational matters is probably reflected in two works published by the American Council on Education. See American Council on Education, Committee on Religion and Education, *The Relation of Religion to Public Education* (Washington: American Council on Education, 1947), also American Council on Education, Committee on Religion and Education, *The Function of the Public Schools in Dealing with Religion* (Washington: American Council on Education, 1953).

p. 162 "*The three major faiths have failed to join forces in a united philosophy of religiously oriented learning.*"

Jews have generally supported public secular education, not advocating the teaching of religion in public schools. But the Jewish "after school Sunday school," voluntarily supported, frequently provided with housing, equipment, and staff of professional quality, is advocated as a supplement to the work of the public schools. See Lee J. Honor, "Trends in Jewish Education," *Religious Education*, January-February, 1953, pp. 18-21.

p. 165 "*A shibboleth has been made of the separation of church and state . . .*"

A third group of religionists not discussed in the chapter is the fundamentalist Protestant evangelical sects. In the main, while sometimes voicing criticism of the "worldliness" of the public schools, these Christians attempt to provide a re-

ligious dimension in education through the nurture of the home and various educational activities connected primarily with the Sunday school. Occasionally, fundamentalists have even defended the secular school and indicated a preference for it, on the philosophical and theological ground that "the worldly" and "the sacred" represent separate domains. Another basis upon which some fundamentalists defend the secular school is the strategic judgment that any religious dimension introduced into the public school would likely be a "liberal" or "modernistic" one. Thus, a strictly secular school is judged to be a lesser evil than one in which a modernized version of the traditional doctrines is taught.

## CHAPTER TEN

# The Critique of the Schools by the New Conservatives

THE YEARS OF the Depression and World War II were years when many educators developed a great concern about political and economic problems of our country. These were the years when the so-called "social reconstruction" emphasis developed among pragmatists, in contrast to the earlier "child-centered" emphasis. Some took leadership in the American Federation of Teachers, and Kilpatrick and Dewey joined with these educators in suggesting that teachers should support the ideals of a cooperating society in contrast to the traditional economic individualism of the pre-Depression years. They expressed in educational theory the economic ideals that characterized the long administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Therefore, just as religious leaders and statesmen who have had "New Deal" sympathies have been accused of advocating "liberal," "socialistic," or even "communistic" policies, so educational leaders have been thus accused. Mortimer Smith, Louis Budenz, and William F. Buckley have made this explicit in their popular writings, sometimes naming leaders in the progressive education movement and in educational pragmatism as primarily responsible. Peter Viereck argues that American edu-

cators and intellectuals as a *group* were far too "soft" on communism; that is, that they unrealistically held to the illusion that communism was a great moral crusade rather than an evil international conspiracy.

Popular opinion has it that youth is the time for liberalism, while conservatism is the outlook more characteristic of old age. In the decades of the 'fifties, however, conservatism has been embraced and deliberately and aggressively forwarded by younger journalists and political scientists.\* Buckley, Viereck, Russell Kirk, and Clinton Rossiter are among the younger intellectuals who have chosen to label themselves conservatives. Kirk, like Buckley, makes a vigorous attack upon Dewey and the pragmatists in education. Modern man needs permanent, eternal moral values to stand upon, so the argument goes. The pragmatists deny the existence of eternal principles and teach of a world of constant change. We need the old values, the old tested beliefs, to give personal and social living stability and strength. Mature educational leaders like Bernard Iddings Bell and Alan Valentine support the young conservatives and share their criticism of the strong social emphasis in modern education. David Riesman suggests that the strength of the nineteenth century "inner-directed" man is something to be admired. In different ways, the various supporters of the "new conservatism" make the same point that Riesman does about mid-twentieth century man—that is, that he has lost himself in the great emphasis upon social conformity which our culture and our schools nowadays foster. Kirk goes so far as to raise serious questions about equalitarian democracy and mass education, as did A. J. Nock and T. S. Eliot.

Conservatism, as it has become increasingly articulate in the utterances of men of letters, has had strong appeal. The disillusionments that came in the second quarter of the twentieth century encouraged men to return to authority—to eternal verities. Conservatism furnishes answers to those who quest for cer-

tainty. When education is looked upon as an endeavor carried on in the light of tradition and involving transmission to the young of the essentials of that tradition, it has unmistakable direction and purpose. Teachers know what their objectives are. They are in a position to devote their time and energies to refining techniques for preserving and extending established tradition.

To be sure, conservatism can consist of a self-seeking attitude of bigotry. Yet if some things worthy of conservation can be identified, the deliberate move to strengthen and support them may be of value.<sup>8</sup> Thus, no less a liberal than Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has seen a certain promise in the contribution of the so-called New Conservatives to twentieth century social thought in America.<sup>1</sup>

## INFLUENCE OF SOCIALISM ON AMERICAN SCHOOLS

Peter Viereck believes that the intellectuals have not fought the communists as aggressively as they once fought Hitler.

Today in most colleges, a finishing-school urbanity—offending nobody and playing it safe—is a greater threat to education than the now diminishing one of communism. In America, even under perfect free speech, a respectability complex among students and teachers can subvert the scholarly ideal of free inquiry more than any leftist or rightist encroachment on academic freedom.<sup>2</sup>

He believes that because of the emphasis upon criticism in modern schools, students have become insensitive to the many horrible things occurring in the world today.<sup>3</sup> In direct opposition to the pragmatic liberals, he writes:

The existence of ethics is innate in man, innate only in man, innate in all men without exception . . . values and the Christian ethics are

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., as quoted in Russell Kirk, *A Program for Conservatives* (Chicago: Regnery, 1954), pp. 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953), p. 304.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

not only innate, but are the most important and distinguishing characteristics of man. Man must prevent their being relativized, pragmatized, and semiticized away.<sup>4</sup>

Viereck distinguishes between Communism and communism. Russia represents Communism in its outward, material form. Using means of physical violence, this Communism levels and standardizes things material as well as spiritual; it is marked by disregard for the dignity of human life. However, communism is a philosophy that standardizes human thought, brings about the degeneration of individuals into masses, and is marked by disregard for the sanctity of the individual human soul.<sup>5</sup> To Viereck, pragmatism would appear to be another representation of this inner "communism," and perhaps largely responsible for it; for stable values are lost as the pragmatist places so much stress upon freedom and so little upon discipline that he comes to lack inner direction and conviction.

It must be emphasized that Viereck would be the last to call the pragmatist a Communist in the accepted sense. He would be the first to point out vital differences not only in methods and degree but also in motivation. Pragmatists, he realizes, can have the finest of objectives, and in fact can be so blinded by their own zeal that they are unaware of the harm they are doing; the Russian rulers, on the other hand, are ". . . beyond the metaphoric Roman lines of civilized humanity."<sup>6</sup> Despite those vitally important differences, however, there are some attitudes in which Communists and relativistic "communists" concur.

They both promulgate change as necessary and good. The political and social change that they promote is aimed ostensibly at political or economic equality. Viereck, as a conservative, discounts this equality in favor of freedom.<sup>7</sup> But the greatest and most dangerous parallel between Communists and pragmatists, as Viereck sees it, is in their attitudes toward the search for truth.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-39.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Since pragmatists do not admit to truth but only to "warranted assertions," they do not, according to Viereck, search for it; their search, rather, is for workable solutions. This is vital to Viereck, because the importance of the search for truth is the very core of his philosophy. Everything that he values—liberty, individuality, morals, ethics, self-restraint, and integrity, the defense against both forms of communism—all, he believes, rest on this base.

How do we know the overt Communism when it appears? Only by developing within ourselves "ethical traffic lights."<sup>8</sup> Only then can we sort out the issues involved and make the clear judgments that prevent us from becoming fellow-travelers. The chief establisher of these traffic lights, according to Viereck, is tradition. Barbarism has never taken over where parliament exists and law is supreme; but where force has been placed above law, civilization has disappeared.

The inner communism is characterized by its opposition to universal values, its relativism, and its reliance upon expediency. Its current danger is minimized by the fact that its proponents have been indoctrinated with traditional values in their generation. Therefore, they automatically propose good ends. However, as they teach explicitly that means and ends are relative, not absolute, they invite manipulation of means to bad ends on the part of individuals of the future who will not themselves have been indoctrinated with such traditions. Thus the inner communism could become outward Communism. In the meantime, this philistinism brings about a blindness to the outward Communistic force and its evils; hence, the phenomenon of the fellow-traveler. The defense, again, is inner direction resulting from the working of an inner core of values and ethics.

Viereck believes that the function of the intellectual is with education *per se*, not with politics or society. Education is of more vital importance than politics because ethics must be the

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

core of politics, but ethics must be learned afresh by each new generation. Since ethical principles are established not by the immediate surroundings, but by the weight of the past, education should therefore be primarily concerned with the passing on of tradition.<sup>9</sup> While Viereck acknowledges the importance of self-expression, he maintains that discipline is more important than self-expression, for without discipline the all-important ethical self-restraint cannot be learned.<sup>10</sup>

Viereck is, of course, a conservative by his own declaration.<sup>11</sup> He believes that man is created in God's image. With the core of inner control developed, he can live his life in that image; without it he is evil. Universal law places justice above nature in all spheres. Man's natural inequality must be recognized. Viereck's emphasis upon the importance of effective leadership, his aversion to levelling of all kinds, the importance he gives to tradition, and his antipathy to "majoritarianism"<sup>12</sup>—all mark him as a consistent political and philosophical conservative. Unlike many conservatives, however, Viereck does not believe in a closed society. He believes that men are not, and should not be considered, equal; but to him, the only true aristocracy is based not on material, social, or even intellectual wealth but, rather, on moral wealth. This moral aristocracy need not be limited—the more of it the better.<sup>13</sup> While political conservatives generally believe that economic independence is necessary for political independence, Viereck holds that moral independence must precede both.<sup>14</sup> This moral independence is not to be construed as relativistic self-expression but, rather, as the development of inner direction and values basic enough to serve as guides in all circumstances. Thus, Viereck returns to the core of his message—the search for truth, the plea for integrity. For him, the only true self-expression lies in abiding by one's principles—which

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 248-49.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 198-99, 245.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 245 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 220.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 243.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.



one must first find. In some such moral revolution, he believes, lies the cure for both the inner communism and the outward Communism.

Viereck is probably the most responsible of the new conservative group to work directly with the threat of Communism and the ideological trends that, wittingly or unwittingly, play into its hands. Whether Mortimer Smith, William F. Buckley, and even Louis Budenz are critically responsible scholars is debated by their readers. Two small books published by Mortimer Smith<sup>15</sup> deal directly with public education and develop the educational doctrines shared by the new conservatives. Smith claims to present evidence that ". . . learning, in the traditional sense of disciplined knowledge, is rapidly declining in our public schools, not through fortuitous circumstances but by deliberate, and almost invariably well-intentioned design of those responsible for setting the direction of public education."<sup>16</sup> Selecting well-known leaders at outstanding American universities as examples, he maintains that there is a deliberate attempt to make the schools instruments of social reconstruction, suggesting that there is a movement to promote a type of communistic philosophy among teachers in training.\*

### EDUCATIONAL THEORIES OF NEW CONSERVATIVES

Russell Kirk claims that the contemporary conservative comes from all walks of life, and that conservatism is horizontally and vertically pervasive through all layers and regions of our society and in all parts of the nation. The thinking conservative knows that men are a mixture of both good and evil, and that men may be inclined either way according to their impulses at a given moment. Only a strong and enduring belief in God and his wisdom which passes understanding can save men and their

<sup>15</sup> *And Madly Teach* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1949); *The Diminished Mind* (Chicago, Regnery, 1954).

<sup>16</sup> *The Diminished Mind*, p. 2.

civilization from destruction. The true conservative, according to Kirk, knows that the economic problems blend into political problems, political problems into ethical problems, and ethical problems into religious problems. What gives the conservative strength in time of trouble is his belief in a moral order that joins all classes in a common purpose, and through which men may live in justice and harmony.

Kirk defines pragmatism as the judging of all things purely from the standpoint of how they work; that is, simply in the light of present experience, in contempt of tradition and the past. He claims that the pragmatist has no belief in abiding principles, and that "a man without principles is an unprincipled man."<sup>17</sup> He speaks deeply and apparently with reverence for the "unbought grace of life," the disciplining of reason and imagination, and that habit of acting upon principle which rises superior to immediate advantage and private interest, distinguishing the free man from the slave.

A mind and temper shaped on this pattern were the ends of old-fashioned education; and as that system has decayed among us, so have minds and tempers deteriorated proportionately.<sup>18</sup>

Like the literary humanists, Kirk apparently builds upon the assumption of an orderly, systematic universe, within which man lives virtuously as he builds his career upon its laws. Kirk affirms his agreement with Paul Elmer More that discipline of the imagination of the student so that he may become aware of the sublime order of being is a central educational concern.<sup>19</sup>

According to Kirk, very few public school people or, for that matter, leaders in the affairs of our institutions of higher learning have the slightest idea of what More describes. The influence of the followers of Dewey and Kilpatrick upon our schools has

<sup>17</sup> Russell Kirk, *A Program for Conservatives*, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Elmer More as quoted in Russell Kirk, *A Program for Conservatives*, p. 59.

resulted in a thoroughgoing emphasis upon the contemporary, the passing, the transient. In the words of Kirk,

No thinker's work, during the past century, has become more thoroughly obsolete than that of John Dewey, although he died only yesterday; for his social and educational ideas were all predicated on the assumption, now fatally exploded, that rational and material progress is automatic and inevitable, and will lead to a benevolent universal state, equalitarian and strifeless.<sup>20</sup>

In Kirk's view, pragmatism holds a peculiar fascination for a large group of leading public school educators who are in control of our educational institutions. These followers of the doctrines of John Dewey have made the students of our schools and universities into a "... pack of bird-brains, not stupid but bird-like, unable to keep at any occupation for more than a few minutes; they flutter from one thing to another, unable to work or to concentrate."<sup>21</sup> Their activity is essentially purposeless, for lasting ends to which labored dedication may be given are denied. According to Kirk, the followers of Dewey have perverted our system of education. They have deliberately discouraged respect for the wisdom of our ancestors, treated religion and ethics as so much "superstitious rubbish," and discarded history for the "so-called social studies." They have taught the sciences as a means of power over nature and man, not as a road to wisdom, and have treated spelling, grammar, mathematics, and geography, as so many boring impediments to necessary adjustment.<sup>22</sup> The final result of this perversion of the educational system is to starve the imagination, discourage the brighter students, and destroy reason. In citizenship, claims Kirk, the educational modernists have been preparing the way to a soulless proletariat and a mass state which is the antithesis of a representative and constitutional government.

It is Kirk's belief that pragmatic theories and practices must be

<sup>20</sup> *A Program for Conservatives*, p. 62.      <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

removed from our educational institutions and replaced with traditional theories of education. He proposes that the aims of this education should be ". . . to adhere to the truth, according to the light that is given to the teacher: a promise to conserve the wisdom of our ancestors and to extend the empire of knowledge as best a teacher can; a promise to guide and awaken the student, but not to indoctrinate; a promise to abide by principles of social order, as expressed in the country's constitution; and a promise always to put freedom of the mind above material advantage and the passions of the hour."<sup>23</sup>

Clinton Rossiter states the basic philosophical position that constitutes the foundation of American conservatism as he sees it. The nature of man, according to the conservative, is more than animal. There is something God-like in it. On the other hand, his nature contains a strain of deep-seated wickedness. In addition, the nature of man is immutable.<sup>24</sup> Men are ". . . grossly unequal . . . in all qualities of mind, body, and spirit."<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, they are morally equal. Thus men are equal before the law and before God, but in some respects they fall inevitably into distinct social classes in the everyday world.<sup>26</sup> Man's duty in this world is to suppress the evil in him and strive to bring out the God-like, to shun vice and embrace virtue.<sup>27</sup> Thus education exists primarily to control vice and nourish virtue, to teach people to think, to survive, to work, and to enjoy leisure. The transmission of the heritage of man, the greatest conserving and civilizing force, is the responsibility of education.<sup>28</sup>

Behind everything are the higher laws of God, and the commands of that law are supported by history, according to Rossiter.<sup>29</sup> For conservatism, religion is basic. Out of religion come

<sup>23</sup> Russell Kirk, *Academic Freedom* (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), p. 133.

<sup>24</sup> Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America* (New York: Knopf, 1955), pp. 22-23.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

such ideals as the love of humanity and God and the placing of moral values above material ones.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, a conservative is cognizant of the importance of practical things, and he bears a healthy distrust of pure reason.<sup>21</sup> To the conservative, government, like society, is an outgrowth of the past—an organic evolution. It cannot, and therefore should not, displace such institutions as family, church, and occupation.<sup>22</sup> The purposes of government are restricted to those of providing protection from external aggression, serving as a symbol of unity, preserving justice, promoting public and private morality, and acting in a limited capacity as a welfare agency.<sup>23</sup>

As to a positive program for the new conservatives in the field of education, Professor Rossiter advises that they steer a steady course between the Deweyites and anti-Deweyites, vocationalists and generalists. He would not allow the community to forget the conservative mission of education. He believes that young people should be educated to be self-knowing as well as self-sustaining. This can be achieved through a truly liberal education.<sup>24</sup>

Alan Valentine makes the judgment that the present generation is the victim of the concurrent disintegration of several pillars upon which civilization was built:

Faith in a personal God and in organized religion; faith in the perfectability of man and the certainty of progress; faith in fixed absolutes to guide thought and action.<sup>25</sup>

As he sees it, the basic issues are whether democracy shall seek quantity or quality as its cultural goal, materialism or humanism as its working method. The men who hammered out the Constitution—Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, *et al.*—worked for a government that was “. . . a compromise between the liberal idea of self-government and the conservative tradition of an aristo-

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-50.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Valentine, *The Age of Conformity* (Chicago: Regnery, 1954), p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

crat-led stability."<sup>36</sup> They believed that the new government was to be regulated not only by the will of the people ". . . who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."<sup>37</sup>

The Founding Fathers realized that the quality of a democratic government depends upon the intellectual maturity and moral standards of the average voter. The early statesmen voiced fear of aggression from without, internal instability, and a levelling of society downward from mediocrity to mediocrity until it became too mediocre to survive. To prevent tyranny they provided the system of checks and balances, guaranteed powers to the states and guaranteed specific rights to private citizens.<sup>38</sup> History shows, however, that ". . . a federal government of limited powers has become a centralized government of almost unrestricted authority."<sup>39</sup>

Believers in popular sovereignty assume that men in the mass are wiser than men in smaller ruling groups. The administrations between the years of 1932 and 1953 were most ". . . deferential to the opinions and wishes of the majority of American voters."<sup>40</sup> In those years, total democracy was approached. But, in Valentine's judgment, the vastness of government in those years led to mediocrity. He characterizes the New Deal government as ". . . an army of busy and competing people certain of their procedures but uncertain of ends."<sup>41</sup>

With pragmatism the national philosophy, it is not surprising that one man of cabinet rank could in 1951 assure another that 'in Washington whatever a man gets away with is usually Okay with the Boss.'<sup>42</sup>

Valentine believes that American education has played an important part in weakening the moral fibre of the country.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Burke as quoted by Valentine, *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapters 11 and 12.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that American education is not elevating popular society but merely informing it, and that it is not preserving humane culture but diluting it.<sup>44</sup>

The remedies suggested by Valentine are in many ways similar to those finally proposed by several of the literary humanists, religious leaders, and other conservatives discussed in preceding pages.

[Education should offer] more elevating incentives for study than preparation for a job, for teaching than the holding of a job, for scholarship than the pursuit of the esoteric or the dissection of the entrails of the minor past. They [free men] could insist that education be regarded not as a commodity but a privilege and the noblest and most difficult of the arts.<sup>45</sup>

To cure our social and political ills, we must define and face the causes of our confusion. Mediocrity must be overcome by a drive for excellence; materialism must be tempered by a yearning for values beyond the material.<sup>46</sup> American society may yet develop an aristocracy of talent and virtue, but a condition necessary for this is the general maturing of values among American people. We must raise ourselves above conformity. Churches must maintain higher standards of spiritual value; a premium upon excellence as well as technical or administrative efficiency must be provided by our great industrial and business enterprises.<sup>47</sup> The tests of a good society are the riches in human personality which it produces and fosters.

According to Valentine, not all authority is fascistic, and having and enforcing standards is not authoritarian. Members of a society should freely agree upon and then maintain ethical absolutes.

Men who urge a deepening of tradition and faith are not . . . defying the progress of modern science.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

Bernard Iddings Bell maintains in *Crowd Culture* that graduates of the schools that employ techniques of education founded on Dewey's theories have weak moral standards and ". . . judge words and deeds only by whether they seem expedient in a given temporary set of circumstances."<sup>49</sup> As Canon Bell surveys American life in 1952, he makes the judgment that we may indeed have made great progress in science, but that we have alarmingly deteriorated morally during the first half of the century.<sup>50</sup> With little knowledge of past civilizations and cultures, we may face an uncertain future and an uncertain position in world politics.

Bell maintains that the group dynamics movement has been fostered by those embracing John Dewey's theories. This technique, he maintains, is one in which, deliberately and systematically, a method for compelling conformity is developed. Alert and constructive criticism employed either by an individual or a small minority is discouraged should it displease the majority. He is also critical of the tendency to rely upon the natural and biological sciences for models of research methods.

According to Bell, progressive education wrongly attempts to ". . . combine older functions of the school with the educative influences of the home, the church, the family doctor, and any number of social agencies."<sup>51</sup> He criticizes an American pedagogy which is unwilling to teach an appreciation of the past,<sup>52</sup> which is "obfuscated by scientificism,"<sup>53</sup> and which neglects a thorough reaching of the three R's.

As a conservative, Canon Bell questions the contribution of liberalism in its recently modern form. He sees a moral deterioration in the wake of the emphasis upon material values promoted by liberalism. He questions what he avers to be the liberal's ". . . indisposition to listen to adverse criticism" and his tend-

<sup>49</sup> Bernard Iddings Bell, *Crowd Culture* (New York: Harper, 1932), p. 58.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.



ency to consider ". . . national self-criticism as traitorous."<sup>54</sup> He questions whether our nation can survive in the world today without a deeper knowledge of tradition. He bemoans the "crowd culture" which has molded the common man into a fellow of shallow morals who is a recipient but not a creator in the fields of politics, literature, sports, amusement, and art—a being who lacks courage and spiritual stamina.

Bell's proposals having to do with religion and the schools envision the end of the public, secular school system; for he advocates that each religious group should sponsor, build, and direct its own schools, receiving state money to do so.<sup>55</sup>

### *Summary*

The purpose of this chapter has been to survey criticisms of public schools and proposals for change on the part of a group of writers who deliberately publicize and advocate what they choose to call a "new conservatism" in America. References have been made to Peter Viereck, poet and professor at Mt. Holyoke College, Russell Kirk, who once taught at Michigan State University, Clinton Rossiter, a respected member of the faculty in political science at Cornell, Alan Valentine of the University of Rochester, and Bernard Iddings Bell, an Episcopal clergyman who was for a time closely associated with Mr. Hutchins and Mr. Adler at the University of Chicago.

Like the literary humanistic scholars and the religious philosophers, the New Conservatives deplore the substitution of a search for "warranted assertions" for the classic search for truth in the schools.\* They think that school discipline has been relaxed, that there has been too much of an emphasis upon the social role of education, and that the effort to make a science of education has been ill-advised. Schools have placed too much emphasis upon the contemporary and changing, and science, so they say, has been treated as a way of controlling and directing change rather than as a method for discovering truth.

With the emphasis on material advantage has gone a deterioration of morals and religion and a tendency to rely upon expediency in human and social relationships. Genuinely free inquiry and ques-

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

tioning has been discouraged by an emphasis upon the group and conformity to the group. This, so they claim, has sometimes constituted, in effect, a kind of indoctrination of the group mind upon individual students, and has produced narrow, provincial people who become incapable of understanding cultures committed to values and traditions different from their own. It is considered that truly humanistic values are absent from the schools and that the elimination of religion from the school program of studies has been unfortunate.

All of these seriously miseducative emphases in education have issued in a kind of moral paralysis in education, which plays into the hands of Russian Communism while ostensibly opposing it.

The theory and practice of education supported by the New Conservatives is one which would see education dedicated to the search for truth, with the firm conviction that the guiding moral standards of men must be formulated in the light of truth. Discipline would be regarded as more important than self-expression, and principle more important than conformity. Freedom of the mind and conscience and the supremacy of moral and spiritual values over material values are stressed. Human nature is viewed as inescapably evil. Men are considered to be morally equal, but unequal in all other ways.

The human predicament, then, demands an education concerned primarily with tradition, for the source of ethical principles is in the past. However, ethics finally rests upon religion; men can cope with evil only by living in the image of God. Since this is the case, religion must be a part of education, and a central part. If religion cannot be taught in the public schools, perhaps sympathetic consideration should be given to the possibility of tax support of church schools.

## Notes

p. 171 " . . . conservatism . . . embraced and deliberately and aggressively forwarded by younger journalists and political scientists."

There may be disagreement about the sincerity and scholarly competence of individuals whose writings have been mentioned in this chapter. For instance, Mortimer Smith, William F. Buckley, and Joan Dunn are primarily journalists

rather than scholars. Russell Kirk has been a controversial figure. Some have been disturbed that Peter Viereck gives such lengthy and serious attention to papers in pumpkins in *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*.

- p. 172 "*. . . if some things worthy of conservation can be identified, the deliberate move to strengthen and support them may be of value.*"

If the term *conservative* be taken in its generic sense, Chapters VIII and IX as well as Chapter X may be understood as discussions of conservative thought in contemporary America. Conservatives wish to preserve and extend social and educational traditions. Some (Chapter VIII) are particularly concerned about preserving certain traditions of literary humanistic scholarship. Others (Chapter IX) are particularly anxious to preserve religious traditions and extend the significance and influence of education by grounding it in a religious perspective. Still others (Chapter X) are primarily committed to preservation of political forms which support the integrity and responsibility of individuals in an age when conformity to the group has become a vogue.

- p. 176 "*. . . movement to promote a type of communistic philosophy among teachers in training.*"

If liberalism has had its "radical fringe" with a body of extremist literature, conservatism has also had its extremist spokesmen. The favorite device of conservative extremists in the twentieth century has been a highly rhetorical use of the designations "communist," "atheist," "materialist." Thus in the body of this chapter, no mention has been made of various journals and political and social leaders. A deliberate effort has been made to restrict the treatment to relatively moderate critics. More extreme and violent charges than those discussed here have been made from time to time by newspaper columnists such as Westbrook Pegler, Fulton Lewis, Jr., and Raymond Moley. A journal *National Republic*, publications of the American Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Roman Catholic publica-

tions such as *The Tablet* and *Our Sunday Visitor* have from time to time carried articles that develop themes discussed in this chapter.

- p. 181 *"Like the literary humanistic scholars and the religious philosophers, the New Conservatives deplore the substitution of a search for 'warranted assertions' for the classic search for truth in the schools."*

Stated negatively, literary humanists are especially concerned about vocationalism, religious leaders about atheism, and the new conservatives about socialism and communism.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# The Weight of Traditional Philosophy in Support of the Criticisms

PRECEDING CHAPTERS have involved a sampling of criticisms of contemporary American education coming from literary humanists, religious leaders, and apostles of the so-called new conservatism. The wide popular audience which these writings have received is a clear indication that we have here not an esoteric specialty far removed from the people. To the contrary, one reason for the tremendous popular interest in the work of the humanistic, religious, and conservative critics of the schools has been that they have expressed clearly and precisely, and have elevated to academic respectability, elements of thought that have withstood the scientific movement of the past century.

Literary humanists, religionists, and the new conservatives work out of a common philosophical orientation.\* They identify a set of doctrines about the universe, man, and nature as "our tradition." They then propound that this tradition provides us with a body of established truth, and that currently unsettled questions of belief, action, and policy in human affairs, and specifically in education, should be settled by reference to this body of truth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A. E. Murphy, "Tradition and the Traditionalists," in *The Authoritarian Attempt to Capture Education*, p. 13.

There is a sympathetic reversion to conceptions of human nature and the world derived from Greek philosophy and Hebrew-Christian religious thought. Emphases such as those upon the liberal arts, the importance of the humanities, and a return to the classics, are justified by a system of metaphysical conceptions. *Humanism and America*, a volume edited by Norman Foerster and published in 1930, was one of the earliest and most influential of the statements emphasizing the basic themes that, by the middle of the century, have become widely shared by American intellectuals. The Foerster volume of 1930 encouraged literary humanists, religionists, and conservatives to become more vocal in their criticisms of technical and vocational courses in the schools and colleges. Interested scholars banded together in a kind of spiritual brotherhood to revive interest in the humanities, generally voicing a distrust of pragmatism and a fear that progressive education was in part responsible for what they saw as a shallow materialism in American life. Self-consciously and deliberately these men went back to Greek philosophy for their guiding conceptions. That there is meaning, pattern, and design in the universe is affirmed. That the eternal ground of this order may be personified and designated by the religious term *God* is granted. The possibility that all movements in our universe have a direction, and that consequently human and natural events are to be understood in the light of cosmic purpose, is viewed sympathetically. Moreover, in this sort of world, nurture of the young comes to be viewed as progressive actualization of potentialities unique to man, certain generic characteristics of man as human that mark the course educational practices should take. Fundamental themes developed by contemporary literary humanists, religious leaders, and conservatives are beautifully stated in classic myths, such as the fable of the cave in *The Republic* of Plato or the fable of the chariots in *Phaedrus*, and recur in the teachings of thinkers like Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Leibniz, Kant, and Hegel. . . .

## THEORY OF THE UNIVERSE

This universe, so the teaching goes, is governed by eternal laws and principles. There is the strong affirmation of the basic intelligibility of the real world. The eternal principles that are the ground of intelligibility are those of truth, goodness, and beauty. These principles, by which the world is governed and by which it is to be understood, are independent of time and place, and independent of particular social conditions. Chance and contingency operate in natural processes, but since natural processes are grounded in an intelligible and orderly universe, even chance can be studied and plotted. Science postulates universal causation. Organizations emerge through evolutionary processes. The world finally "makes sense." Man is at home in this world.

## THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE

Man, in contrast to the plants and lower animals, is endowed with the capacity to understand the principles that govern the universe, for man is a reasonable being. The principles of reason are within him, although they may have become blurred as he has lived his life in the cave of the everyday world. He lives in a world that he can understand, when he has been disciplined by an education appropriate to his nature. The universal principles by which the world is governed are the basis of human knowledge. The secret of the good life is to know them and to govern one's life by them. They are not only intellectual guides; they are also ethical ends.<sup>2</sup>

### *Awareness of universal principles*

These principles originate in the common experience of all men. The basis of philosophy is man's common experience in living. Progress in philosophical thought is not a matter of adding

<sup>2</sup> Norman Foerster, *The American State University* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), pp. 219 ff., 247.

to past knowledge but, rather, of increasingly adequate analysis of the meanings of our experiences. The basic truths—the guiding principles that are principles of the universe, eternal and unchanging—are finally self-evident. You see them the way you finally grasp the truth of a theorem in geometry.<sup>3</sup> In a sense, they are grasped intuitively, as if they were laws written in the heavens.

Humanism is not to be identified with this or that body of traditional precepts. The law of measure on which it depends becomes meaningless unless it can be shown to be one of the "laws unwritten in the heavens" of which Antigone had the immediate perception, laws that are "not of today or yesterday," that transcend in short the temporal process. The final appeal of the humanist is not to any historical convention but to intuition.<sup>4</sup>

### *Absolute moral standards*

Questions of good and bad, right and wrong, are to be decided in the light of these principles. They transcend society. Moral questions are questions of principle, not questions of public opinion. Society can sometimes be wrong. Although the state is superior to the individual on many counts, questions of good or bad, right or wrong, and true or false are personal questions—to be decided by moral individuals in the light of absolute and universal standards.<sup>5</sup>

### *Man essentially intellect*

Human nature does not change. It is the same at every place and at every time. Even when people say that human nature changes, they are referring to something permanent in their very use of the term *human nature*. There is something eternal behind the apparent differences. Now what features or characteristics of us are considered to be distinctively human? To be sure, we share

<sup>3</sup> Mortimer Adler, *Art and Prudence* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1957), p. 248.

<sup>4</sup> Irving Babbitt, "Humanism, an Essay at Definition," in *Humanism and America*, ed. Norman Foerster (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1930), p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Van Doren, *Liberal Education*, p. 40.



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many characteristics with animals and even plants. The student of general zoology does not find many uniquely new features in a study of human anatomy and physiology. The skeleton, the internal organs, the musculature, and reproductive system are very much like those of the other mammals. A good many of our desires and enjoyments we share with the animals; dogs enjoy riding in automobiles and frequently take pleasure in food prepared for humans. The family cat gets as much enjoyment from the favorite chair as we do. The philosophy of the classical tradition sees us as partly animal—as, in a way, brothers of the cats and dogs, butterflies and apes. According to this tradition, however, of all the living creatures, man alone is endowed with mind or intellect. Of all man's characteristics, the most distinctive and most intrinsically valuable are the intellectual virtues.<sup>6</sup>

### *The good life*

It is good for a human being to develop his mind because he is a human being. But again, it is good to develop the mind because it is good to understand. It is good to know reality because reality is there to be known. Knowledge and understanding, that is, are intrinsic goods. It is good to know just because it is good to know. The attitude is like that of the mountain climber who spends a lifetime working to scale a peak, just because the mountain is there. It is like the attitude of the astronomer who studies the stars just because they are there to be studied. Attainment of the ideal of completeness of life, of a human nature rounded and perfect on all its sides, is of greatest worth.<sup>7</sup> Attainment of this ideal of completeness of life depends on the exercise of intelligent self-restraint,<sup>8</sup> and such discipline or self-restraint consists of the ability to relate facts to principles and see things in perspective.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> R. M. Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), p. 67 and *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Norman Foerster, "Preface," in *Humanism and America*, pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Foerster, *The American State University*, p. 247.

The process of self-realization may be looked upon as one in which the potentialities of the person are actualized. Inasmuch as man is a rational being, however, his achievement of form and his actualization of his potentialities are directed by himself.

### *Means to the good life*

To the extent that a person has been educated, he possesses not only the power to grow but also the ability to shape, form, or direct that growth. Human form is something achieved out of potentiality. The potentiality for form is given, but struggle under discipline is necessary for the realization of form. Self-direction is accomplished as the individual discovers and incorporates into his personality certain attitudes and modes of behavior which are supposed to be universal. The individual becomes a *person* as the universal or generic in him is actualized. The self is realized as the individual becomes humane, a practitioner of the intellectual virtues, a pursuer of truth, goodness, and beauty, a cultured individual, and a disciplined, balanced person. The life of reason is the distinctively human life. The goodness of living humanly or living reasonably needs no defense. One who questions the goodness of the life of reason is questioning the goodness of life itself. One who rejects the life of reason for a life devoted to the pursuit of physical comforts is rejecting himself as a human being. He is living like an animal. He is merely vegetating.<sup>10</sup>

### *Happiness and the good life*

There is no conflict between this emphasis and values such as happiness and a good society. But, just as the intellectual virtues are good in themselves, they are also indispensable to goods such as happiness, peace, and social productivity, for individuals and for societies.<sup>11</sup> For true happiness and a truly good society are

<sup>10</sup> Mortimer Adler, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), pp. vii-viii; also Adler, *Art and Prudence*, p. 213.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

only possible as men pursue truth, goodness, and beauty. The self-realizing person is in possession of a balanced, poised personality. This is the product of intelligent, disciplined control. Such people are the happiest people and the best citizens.

## THEORY OF EDUCATION

In the light of the theory of the universe and of human nature outlined above, what educational practices are advocated? How is it proposed to develop reason in men who live their lives in this reasonable, intelligible universe?

### *Purpose of education*

The general conditions for achieving the good life are the general principles of education. Certain characteristics of man that mark him as human are to be drawn out and given expression. Education is to concentrate on bringing out and developing those features of man that make him different from the animals. Thus, there is a sense in which we can say that the best educated person is the most human person. To be sure, the rest of us are also human, but we are inferior in our humanity to the person who has been more completely, more fully educated. The purpose of education is to "lead out" or "draw out" what is already there. The purpose of education is self-realization, for if the self can be made completely real through expert cultivation by a master teacher, then we can most completely express our humanness.<sup>12</sup>

A truly educated person exhibits poise, self-control, and culture because he applies the eternal standards to specific situations. He is a master of situations because of his wisdom. His is a noble spirit because his life is guided by truth.<sup>13</sup> Education

<sup>12</sup> Van Doren, *Liberal Education*, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Irving Babbitt, "Humanism, an Essay at Definition," in *Humanism and America*, pp. 42-43, 49.

is development; education is drawing out; education is self-realization; education is becoming human by becoming progressively aware of the truth. Such education is good because it is real. Man is "that way." An education that develops reason is good education because reason is there to be developed. More than that, it is good education because it enables man to understand his world. But more, since man is a reasonable being living in a reasonable universe, an education that concentrates upon the development of reason will also work out to be the best education for developing good citizens holding good jobs in a good society. These principles of which we have spoken are basic to everything—to science, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The chief and fundamental function of education is to shape man as man, to draw out and develop the distinctively human in him. Education, to be sure, is something which goes on in different times and in different places, but always its chief function is to shape man. It does not matter whether the individual is living in the twentieth century or in the second, whether he is a Hottentot or a Manhattan cliff dweller. He is a human being, and because of this, the central task of education is to bring out and develop his potentialities as one. Whether a child is a beautiful physical specimen with a fine mind, or physically crippled and feeble-minded, the child is a human being with human potentialities. The obligation of the school is to bring out his essential humanness. People thus educated can operate well in all fields. An education that develops reason is best, in and of itself; it is best as a means to happiness; it is best as a preparation for citizenship; it is even the best vocational education.<sup>14</sup>

### *Content of education*

The discipline of the Western intellectual tradition is that which nearly all the literary humanists, religious leaders, and conservatives recommend as the one that will develop minds and con-

<sup>14</sup> Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, p. 63.

tribute most to self-realization.\* The methods and content of Western thought demonstrate the eternal principles; thus, so the reasoning goes, men must be disciplined in the methods and content of classic thought before they realize the inescapability of the eternal principles and understand the applications to life which follow from them. In this sense it may be said that the source of regulating principles is the thought of the past.<sup>15</sup> Wisdom comes as we steep ourselves in study of our traditions. Thus seen, wisdom is fundamentally traditional and conservative. To be human, then, is to be in possession of knowledge, to have developed the capacity for judgment, and to be morally virtuous. It is to be a part of one's cultural heritage.\* These things come about as an individual is liberally educated; that is, as he comes to know history and literature, and as he has been disciplined by the study of languages and mathematics.

The aim of education . . . is to guide man in the evolving dynamism through which he shapes himself as a human person—armed with knowledge, strength of judgment, and moral virtues—while at the same time conveying to him the spiritual heritage of the nation and the civilization in which he is involved, and preserving in this way the century-old achievements of generations. The utilitarian aspect of education—which enables the youth to get a job and make a living—must surely not be disregarded, for the children of man are not made for aristocratic leisure. But this practical aim is best provided by the general human capacities developed. And the ulterior specialized training which may be required must never imperil the essential aim of education.<sup>16</sup>

### *Function of the elementary school*

Dispositions to be fostered in the young child are those which finally make possible a mature life ruled by reason. Love of truth, love of good and justice, and a conscientious, responsible attitude toward work have an important place among these. Self-

<sup>15</sup> Foerster, "Preface," in *Humanism and America*; Adler, *Art and Prudence*, pp. viii-ix; Van Doren, *Liberal Education*, p. 143.

<sup>16</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), p. 10.

discipline and good moral habits are objectives, but the emphasis on habits and habit-formation need not necessarily issue in an elementary education that is repressive and negative. The task of the teacher might be thought of as that of liberating the good energies so as to help children achieve control of the bad ones.<sup>17</sup> The moral discipline that elementary education should cultivate and develop may be thought of as the reasonable control of desires. It is the habit of wanting the right thing at the right time.<sup>18</sup> Habit, thus conceived, plays an important part in moral virtue. In adulthood, morally mature and morally immature persons may be distinguished by the degree to which habits have become fixed. We speak of the stable personality. The stability of such a person—a trait which makes him dependable and admirable—has been achieved because he has made a habit of virtue. He has built certain ways of acting into his disposition, so that he is a person of integrity.<sup>19</sup> The basis for such integrity is laid in childhood. Children must be led to form good habits, for moral maturity is based upon habituation. We may say that elementary school teachers need to help children build good habits, into their lives. When people become older, they need to maintain the good habits by exercising them—by continuing to live the good life.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the foundation of moral habituation, which is a prime responsibility of the elementary school, this institution also introduces children to the first steps of mastery of the tools of learning. This is intellectual work, and the beginnings of intellectual work should be found in elementary schools. While elementary education may well be based upon experience, although there is some question as to whether it is the job of the school itself to provide the experiential basis of learning, the

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-39.

<sup>18</sup> Mortimer Adler, *How to Think about War and Peace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), p. 232.

<sup>19</sup> Adler, *Art and Prudence*, p. 177.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.



work of the school is primarily in moral habituation and in the beginnings of intellectual discipline.

In general education . . . we may wisely leave experience to life and set about our job of intellectual training.<sup>21</sup>

### *Function of the secondary school*

Once the foundations for learning are laid in the elementary school—in the time before the mind is ready to do its work—liberal education begins. The literary humanists, religionists, and conservatives generally frown upon permitting students wide choice in general education. Some would insist that there must be no electives whatsoever, the argument being that the immature mind has no criteria for making intelligent choices.

Mastery of the arts of language is fundamental in liberal education.<sup>22</sup> Reading is a basic tool for living the good life, for to read thoughtfully and analytically is to reason.<sup>23</sup> In meaningful reading, one finds himself in a discussion with the writer. One comes to reason with a book and think through the issues raised.

The mind which is trained to read well has its analytical and critical powers developed. The mind which is trained to discuss well has them further sharpened. One acquires a tolerance for arguments through dealing with them patiently and sympathetically. The animal impulse to impose our opinions on others is thus checked. We learn that the only authority is reason itself—the only arbiter in any dispute is the reasons and evidence. We do not try to gain ascendancy by a show of force or by counting the noses of those who agree with us. Genuine issues cannot be decided by mere weight of opinion. We must appeal to reason, not depend on pressure groups.<sup>24</sup>

The study of language comes to include not only reading, but also analysis of the structure of language, of logic, and persuasion. Mathematics, too, contributes to the development of orderly reasoning and careful analysis of meanings. Upon such a basis

<sup>21</sup> Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, p. 70.

<sup>22</sup> Van Doren, *Liberal Education*, p. 131.

<sup>23</sup> Adler, *How to Read a Book*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 362-63.

of careful intellectual discipline, further and more advanced study of philosophy, history, natural science, literature, poetry, and the fine arts may contribute to the refinement of liberal discipline. The student grounded in the study of grammar, rhetoric, logic and mathematics will recognize intellectual order in new forms in these studies.<sup>25</sup>

It is agreed by the various literary humanists, religious thinkers, and conservatives that more attention should be given to the great masterpieces of our literary heritage. They are the carriers of the cultural tradition. That a classic is old is not important. The important consideration is that the classics are the great minds of Western civilization in action. We can become liberally educated as our minds are disciplined by the great minds. The classics are classics because they demonstrate superior methods of thinking. The acquaintance with great literature and great thought which thus develops is not a mere passive awareness. The Tradition becomes a part of one as he controls his thinking by its perennial arts. The elements of our common human nature are discovered here. Our minds are thus made.

In addition to all this, however, the content of the great books is vital. That is, the great books not only demonstrate the way to think; they also treat of the things men ought to be thinking about. It is only by acquaintance with the past that the present can be understood. The educated person can maintain his poise in times of personal and cultural stress—and thus exert leadership—because his feet are solidly planted. That is, he has cultural and intellectual roots; he has developed a scale of values which gives him strength and guidance; he understands the agonies and passions of his forebears.<sup>26</sup> This is because there are certain great human problems that are perennial.\* Liberal education deals with that portion of the past which is always present, with the art and discipline of thinking significantly.

<sup>25</sup> Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, pp. 55 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Van Doren, *Liberal Education*, p. 131.

Liberal education, rooted in the wisdom of the past, thus remains forever contemporary.<sup>27</sup>

Here, then, we have the point of view which should guide general or liberal education. Liberal education, thus defined, is seen as development of the intellectual disciplines and prolonged study of the literature of the humanistic tradition as the educational program for adolescent youth. Many of the literary humanists do not make a clear distinction between the high school and the undergraduate college. Apparently some have doubt about the appropriateness of the American high school in its present organization. Thus, the colleges at the University of Chicago and at St. John's accepted qualified young people at the age of 16, upon completion of the customary tenth grade. Mark Van Doren asserts that the high school is an anomalous institution which must either disappear altogether or distribute its effort forward into college and backward into elementary school.<sup>28</sup> However the educational ladder be arranged and administered, the curriculum during the adolescent years should, so it is claimed, involve learning the arts of investigation, discovery, criticism, and communication, and developing firsthand an intimate acquaintanceship with the great books in which these arts are demonstrated.<sup>29</sup>

### *Importance of cultural heritage*

Realization by men of their ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty depends upon effective transmission and preservation of the cultural heritage. Man is an animal of culture and he cannot become mature except as he is disciplined by the collective experience of his society.<sup>30</sup> It is not enough to master the Tradition as a body of subject matter. One must be able to use it. The past must be brought to bear upon the present. Thus it may be that

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

<sup>30</sup> Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, p. 8.

locating a problem to be solved—the very awareness of a problem—depends upon mastery of traditional insights and approaches. The ultimate educational ends are the eternal principles which distinguish man from the animals. In general education we are devoted to drawing out the elements of our common human nature, not so much to the cultivation of individual differences among men.<sup>31</sup> Incorporated in the literary tradition are the eternal principles that have relevance and validity always. The principles to guide us in approaching contemporary problems—in art, in politics, in morals—were discovered long ago. The classics containing the traditions of European wisdom throw light on these problems.<sup>32</sup> Thus, we should not talk about education for democracy, or education for world order, or education for this, that, or the other. We simply need good education, and there are standards in the nature of things and in man for determining this.<sup>33</sup> A liberal education is the study of the eternal and unchanging. The curriculum may well be thus organized. It should have a design that makes clear which studies are central and which are secondary, and students should be led through this curriculum systematically. The so-called "problems approach" must be used with great care as a pedagogic method, for it may be dangerous. Such a procedure may confuse proper educational sequence and order, and it is impossible to have social order without intellectual order. It is through such analysis that Mr. Hutchins has arrived at his conclusion, highly publicized, that metaphysics is the study that should unify all elements of liberal education, and that, at the same time, the study of basic principles is the best guarantee of world peace, good citizenship, and prosperity.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, p. 73; also *No Friendly Voice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), p. 90.

<sup>32</sup> Adler, *Art and Prudence*, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>33</sup> Van Doren, *Liberal Education*, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, pp. 95 ff., also *No Friendly Voice*, pp. 51-52, 66 ff., 105.

*Role of science*

Traditionalists draw a distinction between facts and values. The values are the ultimate moral and metaphysical truths in the light of which facts must be judged. Experimental science may help us in determining the facts, but what to do with these facts may be decided only in the light of the eternal principles of Tradition.<sup>35</sup> Science confers power, but the power has to do only with the mastery of means. Philosophy must determine the ends. Thus, philosophy, religion, and the humanities are superior to science at all points. They tell us what to investigate and set the foundation for empirical research; then they come in again to tell us what to do with the facts discovered by scientific analysis.<sup>36</sup> Thus, more emphasis is placed upon literature and philosophy than upon experimental science. There is the fear that science and technology will make men slaves of a technocratic society—that modern science may become a kind of soulless Frankenstein which will finally sap the roots of liberty. Thus, Maritain warned in the years of World War II that if we held everything that is not subject to experimental demonstration a matter of myth, although we might conquer the Nazis on the battlefield we would lose to them in the realm of human values.<sup>37</sup> Hutchins, Adler, Maritain, and Foerster, insisting that science confers only mastery of means, make science of subsidiary importance in liberal education. Maritain and Hutchins take the explicit position that, although specialized scientific institutes may be affiliated with universities, training in such institutes is not to be a part of liberal or general education.<sup>38</sup> Such specialized training has its place only at the higher university levels, and those who are allowed to pursue such specialized training must have a well-rounded liberal education first.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Adler, *Art and Prudence*, pp. 148–49.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>37</sup> Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, pp. 113–14.

<sup>38</sup> Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, pp. 83 ff.; Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Van Doren, *Liberal Education*, p. 167.

The important truths for living are embodied in the literary tradition, not in modern experimental science. Not the specifics of the technician's laboratory, but general principles or theories are the proper subject matter for education.<sup>40</sup> Development, elaboration, and refinement of principles which, in turn, are ordered by the Tradition, is the function of the university. The laboratory sciences do not develop their own theoretical principles of organization. There are actually philosophical assumptions in the organization of every science. Science may confer mastery of means, but philosophical analysis based on self-evident principles common to the experience of all men is needed to determine the ends that they should serve. The facts discovered by scientific inquiry are of value only as they are ordered by disciplined minds toward true ends.<sup>41</sup> Thus, we return again to the emphasis upon language, literature, mathematics, and the great books of the Western Tradition. They, not the empirical sciences, are the center of the curriculum in this view.<sup>42</sup>

### *Education for leadership*

To advocate that education be geared to eternal values involves the conception that there is an absolute scale of human excellence. Thus, one of the chief functions of the school will be to sift from the inferior those whose native aptitude makes them absolutely better than others. Educational procedures to accomplish this will involve adjustment of materials to the capabilities of students. Those of lesser ability will be given a shorter training period and training of a different kind. The able and industrious who survive the intellectual rigors will receive education to develop in them the intellectual power that comes from thorough discipline in Tradition. The general inferiority of the masses is inevitable. Even so, it will be to the good of society if the

<sup>40</sup> Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> Hutchins, *No Friendly Voice*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>42</sup> Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, pp. 60 ff.

level of excellence as measured in terms of absolute truth, goodness, and beauty can be raised to a maximum. Good education will help each human being become as good as he is capable of becoming. A democracy will give each of its members as much liberal education as he can take; in fact, no individual will be allowed to escape it. Finally it must be recognized that men are of different potentialities. Some men cannot be as human as other men; some men are not by nature as good and wise as others. Liberal education for all is likely to produce a pyramid with the best men on top.<sup>43</sup> It is assumed that most men do not have the ability to become aristocrats, princes, and philosophers, but society is more healthy when each individual is helped to become as princely and as philosophical as his abilities allow.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, a course of study designed to produce an intellectual elite may also be a course of study in which all are carried as far as their abilities will allow; the ability of the individual may determine how far he should go in such a curriculum. The education that prepares for the good life also prepares for citizenship. Individuals are good citizens to the extent that they are good people. The quality of a democracy—the very possibility of its continued existence—depends on the degree of absolute goodness achieved by its citizens through liberal education. Because man's basic mental processes are the same and because practical wisdom is a product of the intellectual virtues operating in experience, a liberal education oriented toward truth, goodness, and beauty constitutes an effective preparation for practical affairs and vocational life.<sup>45</sup> Yet it may be that some people must be vocationally trained while others, destined to lead these workers, are educated for leadership. A democracy must have its leaders, and those leaders must be liberally educated. A protection against

<sup>43</sup> Van Doren, *Liberal Education*, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, pp. 63 ff.

totalitarian mob rule inheres in educational provisions that identify and cultivate respect for those who can think.<sup>46</sup>

Some of the literary humanists, religious leaders, and conservatives, notably Russell Kirk, Mortimer Adler, A. J. Nock, and T. S. Eliot, go so far as to question equalitarian democracy as we know it. Thus Mortimer Adler interprets the American tradition of equality in proportional terms. He interprets the maxim that all men are born equal to mean that they should be treated equally. Then he argues that since there are natural inequalities among men, "equal treatment" must mean treatment proportional to the natural inequalities. This principle of proportional equality—that is, of freedom and responsibility proportional to natural ability—is applied to education and suffrage. He denies that democracy means giving equal amounts of suffrage or education to all men.<sup>47</sup> Thus when absolute truth, goodness, and beauty are held as standards against which all men are ranked according to their excellence as men, the many fall short and a few rank high on the scale. However, since these standards are the measure of a good society as well as of a good man, society should be led by the best men and educational practice will have as one of its major functions the selection of such.

### *Summary—points at issue*

According to literary humanists, advocates of a return to religious authority, and apostles of the so-called new conservatism, educational standards that transcend the social conditions of a particular time and place are to be discovered in intellectual traditions of the Western world. They believe that there are universal principles of knowledge and goodness, and that right and wrong, true and false are determined by these principles, which are applied as judgmental criteria. Thus, education in any time and place is good as it measures

<sup>46</sup> Adler, *How to Read a Book*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>47</sup> Adler, *Art and Prudence*, p. 99.



up to these principles. Contemporary public school policy, on the other hand, has emphasized the importance of adjusting school programs to particular social and cultural circumstances, and there has been special emphasis upon the uniquely new problems for man which have emerged with technology. There has been a strong tendency for public school people to emphasize empirical science as the resource for guiding standards in educational work, and tradition has been looked upon as of conditional and strictly instrumental value as a resource. This is because so much of tradition comes out of epochs in which the critical attitude of modern science was not cultivated and in which empirical techniques were obviously of a crude sort.

According to the advocates of tradition, there should be a fixed school program involving an ordered and sequential arrangement of studies. Such intellectual order is a condition of the good society, and of wisdom in practical affairs. The principles of intellectual order are really self-evident. It may not be possible, however, for us to experience their self-evidence until we have been properly disciplined. The necessary discipline involves acquaintance with the greatest minds of our civilization through study of the classics and mastery of the basic intellectual tools and methods. To be so disciplined is to be a liberally educated person. With regard to these matters, public school policy has shown much more sympathy toward allowing considerable freedom of choice to students. Public school educators have considered that a curriculum is finally ordered in considerable part by the special needs and interests of the people being educated. It has been considered that no one curriculum design is to be preferred for all people, but that courses of study may vary from community to community and even, as has been suggested, from person to person. The view of the public school educators has been that principles of intellectual order are relative to cultural milieus and that, in any case, they are constructed by people working together in social groups. While it is granted that the classics may be of value, there has been a pronounced tendency to de-emphasize classical and humanistic studies in favor of contemporary scientific and practical studies. If there is a basic discipline of thought and inquiry, it is represented in scientific and experimental methods more adequately than in humanistic studies. Thus the "liberally educated person," if the public school educator were to use the term, would be the person

who has learned to be experimentally critical as a participant in a shared process of inquiry into matters of concern to him and others of his time and place.

Traditionalists, as we have demonstrated repeatedly, minimize the importance of experimental science and advocate more emphasis upon humanistic and literary studies. In an extreme view, such as that of Mr. Hutchins, experimental science is relegated to technical institutes attached to the university, and is given little place in general education. To the contrary, public school educators have given more and more place in the typical school curriculum to the sciences. Their attitude has been that since science represents the most successful and dependable way of solving problems, the more scientific we can be the better.

Once more, traditionalists emphasize the importance of an aristocracy. If some persons are absolutely more capable of becoming generally excellent than others, and if these superior individuals possess ability, wisdom, and insight greater than their fellows, it is important to the social welfare that they be identified and prepared through education for leadership. If some men are generally wiser, healthier, and more excellent than their fellows, then the dictates of economy, efficiency, and morality would seem to require that these men have more social influence and more social responsibility than others. But again, public school policy has emphasized democracy more than aristocracy. It has been considered that there are many kinds of excellence, and that every human being can make an excellent contribution somewhere. Thus the view has been that a function of the public school is to serve all young people, nurturing so far as possible the peculiar excellence of each one. Therefore, it has been reasoned, the democratic society will be a many-sided one in which leadership and "followership" are spread throughout the society, depending on the task at hand; leaders will always be responsible to the consent of the followers who, in given situations and for special purposes, will choose the leaders.

### Notes

- p. 188 *"Literary humanists, religionists, and the new conservatives work out of a common philosophical orientation."*

Certain technical distinctions in philosophy are ignored in this chapter. *Scholastic philosophy, Thomistic philosophy,*

*Aristotelian realism*, and *Idealism* are philosophical schools that treat technical philosophical problems somewhat differently. With all the "differences," however, these philosophies have certain important, common features. They hold, together, that the world is an intelligible one amenable to human reason. They hold, together, that man is a creature of reason, distinguished from the brutes by his possession of this special faculty. They hold, together, that man's special destiny on earth is the cultivation of reason, by which the good life for man is to be achieved.

- p. 196 "*The discipline of the Western intellectual tradition . . .*"

Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York: Scribners, 1937), Wilbur M. Urban, *The Intelligible World* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), and Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1945) are works that develop the meaning of a "Great Tradition" or "perennial philosophy" which is interpreted as persisting through the centuries. For a systematic work in the philosophy of education based upon the fundamental propositions of the "Great Tradition" identified by Gilson, see W. Oliver Martin, *The Order and Integration of Knowledge* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957).

- p. 196 "*It is to be a part of one's cultural heritage.*"

Of course, the Great Tradition as identified by scholars like Gilson and Urban is actually not the only "great tradition." Parallel with the philosophic tradition emphasizing the intelligibility of the universe and the supreme significance of reason in man, there have persisted materialistic and naturalistic world views emphasizing change and contingency in the world. The "Great Tradition" of philosophies like Scholasticism, Thomism, Aristotelian realism, and Idealism is sometimes interpreted as grounded in the outlook of Parmenides who emphasized "permanence" or *Being*. Even so, a contemporary with Parmenides, Heraclitus, argued to the contrary for the universality of change.

p. 199 ". . . there are certain great human problems that are perennial."

Theodore Brameld, in *Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Dryden, 1955) distinguishes between the "church perennialists" and the "lay or secular perennialists." He calls the Roman Catholic scholastic philosophers church perennialists, and the non-Catholic philosophers who build on Aristotelian and Thomistic realism, lay or secular perennialists. The distinction between men who are and are not members of the Roman Catholic Church can be made. That church affiliation carries over directly into technical philosophizing is not clear.

**I**

Method

in Education—

Critical

Intelligence a

Center of

Emphasis

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# The Basis for a Responsible Theory of Public Education

THUS FAR IT has been argued that education is necessarily and inescapably a value-charged activity. Education involves choices—we must decide which things are to be taught. The selections do not come ready made. Even though certain strains of American culture may have supported the ideal of a morally neutral school, this is a mistaken and impossible educational position. The so-called "essentials" are the products of critical judgments made about the sort of world in which we live, the nature and destiny of man, and the environment in which the actions of men take place.

It has been argued that it is impossible to squeeze the value content out of education. Education is a matter of choices, and these choices are made by means of criteria or standards of value. Such criteria are furnished by the value-systems that remain alive in the culture. Deliberate education is a moral undertaking—that is, an undertaking based upon judgments as to what children ought to be taught.

If we are willing to grant the inadequacy of the ideal of moral neutrality in educational work, we must move ahead to face the question of authority. We must investigate critically the grounds upon which we make our commit-

ments. One important consideration which should guide choice of criteria for educational judgment has to do with preservation of the institution that is being judged. Today there are indications of attempts to impose upon the schools privately held criteria not shared by most people. Can the free, public, tax-supported school withstand the pressure of those who would modify its public character?

Those who defend the free, public, non-sectarian school take the position that a firmer, deeper, more joyous faith in human intelligence is the one best hope for coming generations of poised, healthy, cultured American young people.\* They see democracy as the political expression of unfettered human intelligence. They stress the inter-relationships among intellectual, social, and personal problems of our day. They hold that one of the more fruitful approaches to the problem of personal frustration is that which works toward strengthening a democratic social order. At the same time, they see vigorous debate and criticism as the essence of democracy. This being the case, the values of freedom and democracy, and the aims and purposes of schools are themselves fully opened to criticism. Hence, the public school controversy is seen as part of the process of democratic decision-making in a free society. Such controversy, conducted responsibly by men willing to have made explicit their philosophical assumptions, is the creative stuff of which the future is forged. Moreover, an important professional responsibility of teachers as of all citizens is that of participating in the analysis and debate involved in such controversy, insisting always that philosophical assumptions be made clear and explicit; for educational issues are finally philosophical issues, and questions of fundamental educational policy relate to conceptions about the universe and man's nature and destiny in it. Nevertheless, in a free society, no one ideology must be adopted as an official public school platform. The values of free, critical intelligence can only

be preserved as they themselves are subjected to thoroughgoing criticism.

## CONFLICTING THEORIES

### *Evolutionary naturalism*

In preceding pages, an effort has been made to show how twentieth century educational thinking has been influenced by evolutionary, naturalistic conceptions of man's world, his destiny in it, how he learns, and what he ought to learn. Three somewhat differing emphases in educational theory and practice were identified: 1) educational technology (Thorndike, the testing movement); 2) the child-centered school (earlier emphases of Dewey and Kilpatrick, child study under the aegis of Freudian theory, Rugg and the artist critics); 3) social reconstructionism (Counts in the 'thirties, the "Social Frontier" group, Brameld). Each of these three movements represented an almost complete break with an approach to education which, for centuries, had been involved in the classical tradition. With all the differences, frequently high-lighted by vigorous disputes in the journals and in national meetings, among the new educationists—technologists, child-development specialists, social reconstructionists—they stood together on a common foundation so far as fundamental theory of man and the universe was concerned. Put simply, they all took Darwin very seriously, extending the implications of evolution to realms of human, moral, social, and educational domains. They began together with an evolutionary, naturalistic set of assumptions.

This outlook is that the universe in all its phases is a product of evolutionary change, and that such change continues with us. Thus, social and moral principles as well as principles of the physical world are constantly changing. Man is a highly complicated organism whose contemporary nature is a product of biological and social evolution. His destiny is to achieve vitality,



poise, and a sense of achievement in this changing world of which he is a part. The methods appropriate to and, demonstrably, most effective in achieving such a life for individuals as for societies are the methods of science and democracy.

As we have seen, educators who accepted an evolutionary, naturalistic world-view at first worked in quite different directions as they attempted to spell out the meanings of science and democracy for educational practice. Educational technologists tried to develop a science of education, endeavoring to quantify and validate experimentally by application of statistical methods an appropriate curriculum and instructional procedure. Romantics in education developed a cult of the child in the name of science and democracy, as if the only principles binding upon children were to be those that they had themselves developed experimentally. A third group of educators gave their attention to ways of achieving social order through education, their conception being that intelligent solutions to social problems are possible through carefully controlled deliberate education.

Those who support modern public education and those who are most severely critical of it are inclined to agree that the most influential philosophy in public school work during the first half of the twentieth century was pragmatism. Leaders such as Dewey, Kilpatrick, Bode, Counts, Raup, Hullfish, and Childs were avowed pragmatists. Others such as Thorndike, Judd, Bagley, Rugg, and Briggs, while not agreeing fully with Kilpatrick on many important points, nevertheless accepted evolution as a theory of the universe and man, and looked upon science as the proper source of guiding ideas about education.

This is not to say that all school teachers and administrators during the first half of the twentieth century accepted and applied all the pragmatic ideas. In every field there is a lag between theory and practice, and there are all sorts of arguments and disagreements down the line. Nevertheless, pragmatism and progressive education were a kind of vanguard movement that ex-

pressed a central theme or emphasis in educational work and in theorizing about education.

### *Traditionalism*

Evidence of strong counter-movements in educational thought in the United States began to appear after the Great Depression which began in 1929. Although an experimental, scientific approach to the enterprise of schooling had come to dominate the thinking of professional leaders in public school policy, traditional ways of thinking about life, learning, behavior, the good life, and the good society had continued to exert force in areas of informal education—in homes, in social gatherings, and in the stories and myths of common people. Increasingly, a degree of conflict between informal and formal education characterized our society. Informal education tended to be regulated more by tradition and religion, while the deliberate educational enterprises conducted by the schools, in the light of professional policy, were increasingly influenced by science and a philosophy of education based on science. Informal education comes out of the social habits or mores and folkways of a culture. It is frequently guided by unexamined, habitual assumptions about the world in which we live, the nature and destiny of man, and the purposes of life. The guiding values of informal education—the education of home, street, club, and neighborhood—are expressed in the novel, in music, in art, in drama, and not so much in critical, scientific formulations.

Unfortunately, much of the discussion about the work of the schools nowadays is confused and misdirected. A large part of it is directed to the instances of inefficient practice which are deplored by all competent school people, regardless of theoretical orientation. American public education is a vast enterprise. Of course, there have been incompetent people and people of poor judgment in education, just as there have been such people in government, in business, and in the arts. Incompetence is not

an issue for educational theory. No one is for it. All citizens who work to see to it that a high level of competence is maintained in the work of the schools are to be commended.

Granting this, however, thoroughly responsible but different conceptions of what the schools ought to be doing are in competition.\* Parents of the children—more than others—need to understand this. The criticisms of public education surveyed in preceding chapters have been drawn from works which involve thoroughgoing criticism of various twentieth century American institutions. The literary humanists are concerned not only about public education but also about the state of the arts, the theater, literature, recreation, and religion. The leaders in religion who criticize the public schools are also critical of certain tendencies in American religious life, home and family living, and social and economic outlook. The new conservatives are vigorously critical of certain political institutions, economic movements, and social customs of our day. Although informal education in the culture has remained relatively more traditional than education in the schools, tendencies criticized in the schools are bound up with certain broader cultural characteristics reflected not only in the schools but also throughout American life. Fundamentally, the public school controversy is one particular dimension of the impact of science, technology, and naturalism upon American society.

With all their differences, the humanists, new conservatives, and religious leaders join in struggling to revive what they consider to be the Great Tradition of Western thought. The institution through which they hope to accomplish this is the school. As we have seen, they claim that the *philosophia perennis* or perennial philosophy has persisted in Western civilization since the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. when Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle stated its fundamental tenets. In contemporary twentieth century debate, literary humanistic scholars, religious leaders, and conservative political theorists, basing their arguments

on the philosophy of the Great Tradition, criticize the public schools and advocate fundamental changes in curriculum and method. The so-called Great Tradition in Western culture holds that we live in an intelligible world based upon stable principles that can be understood by man. It holds that man is capable of achieving a reasonable grasp of his nature and the world in which he lives because he is endowed with mind. The mind of man transcends man's biological and social nature and is his most precious endowment. The primary purpose of education, then, is to train and develop the mind of man. In this connection traditional literature, philosophy, art, religion, and history are of central importance, because the unchanging principles of reason are demonstrated therein. A philosophy of education based on the Great Tradition is one of integrity and responsibility. If the world view of the Great Tradition is accepted as authentic, traditional education at its best is effective education, judged by the criteria provided. Are these, however, the criteria appropriate in contemporary American society? Is the traditional world view that by which American citizens wish to measure their schools? It is to these questions that succeeding pages of this book are devoted.

### THE NEED FOR INTELLECTUAL ORDER

While the public schools are influenced by various contrasting interpretations of the meaning of science and democracy, no one of them is adequate when applied as a guiding educational ideal. That is, educational technology is inadequate as an educational theory because the experimental methods of physics and chemistry (the so-called "exact sciences") are inappropriate to the biological and social subject matter, which is that of education taken as a field of study. The child-centered school is inadequate because it fails to give sufficient emphasis to funded past experience and inescapable social controls. The social reconstruction-

ist point of view is unacceptable, for it exaggerates the political power residing in the school as one among many institutions in a plural society.

What has happened, both in the practice of the schools and in the theorizing of responsible educators concerned primarily with public education, is that a notion of critical intelligence as a primary educational ideal has developed. This is a secular theory of education which emphasizes intellectual discipline and respect for empirically grounded knowledge. Moreover, in the "ground rules" which unquestionably are involved in the scientific method, there is a social morality which sanctions many of the traditional moral and pedagogic canons.

Before 1930, leaders in the progressive education movement—Childs, Bode, Kilpatrick, and Dewey himself—sensed intellectual weaknesses in the movement, and insisted that a pragmatic philosophy of education must include conceptions of educational controls. But laymen and numbers of classroom teachers, for that matter, continued to interpret progressive education to mean random, uncontrolled school situations and a kind of romantic idealization of creativity.

In 1928, Dr. Dewey addressed the Eighth Annual Conference of the Progressive Education Association on the subject, "Progressive Education and the Science of Education." He suggested that progressive schools shared in common an emphasis upon respect for individuality, increased freedom, informality, and a disposition to build on the experiences of boys and girls instead of imposing external subject matter and standards.<sup>1</sup> However, at this early date—before the Depression and long before the disillusioning experiences of World War II and its aftermath—Dewey strongly insisted that the extreme emphasis on individuality and freedom characterizing the progressive schools was a negative or protest emphasis, and that workers in the progressive

<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, "Progressive Education and the Science of Education," *Progressive Education*, V, July-August-September, 1928, p. 197-204.

education movement should assume responsibility for intellectual organization of their work.<sup>2</sup> Stressing that he was not advocating a return to a rigid, formal type of organization characterizing traditional schools, Dewey insisted that improvisation is no substitute for planning, and that planning of a high order must go on in progressive schools. To be sure, the very word *organization* suggests something external and set, as in traditional education. When we give up the type of organization which the traditionalists advocate, however, it is desperately important that we provide some other sort of organization to take its place. Pragmatists hold no brief for chaos. The experimental schools, said Dewey, are under constant temptation to improvise, but if there is improvisation day after day, meaningful command of subject matter does not build up. Although Dewey denied that there is any one subject matter which must be taught, he argued that there must always be some subject matter undergoing formulation. That is, there must be consistent, meaningful learning and growth.<sup>3</sup>

A few years later Boyd Bode, eminent leader of the progressives and professor of education at the Ohio State University, urged that emancipation from a vicious traditional formalism in the schools only sets the task of finding valid principles of order and control. He maintained that progressives had not accomplished this important task and suggested, perhaps with tongue in cheek, that some teachers who belonged to the progressive movement had no clear conception of what they were doing and why.<sup>4</sup> Bode, himself a pragmatist, said that progressive education appeared to be motivated by a vague mixture of sentimentalism,<sup>5</sup> reflection of a growing demand for recognition of the common man,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> Boyd H. Bode, *Progressive Education at the Crossroads* (New York: Newson, 1938), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Rousseauism and instinct psychology,<sup>7</sup> and nineteenth century romanticism.<sup>8</sup> He said that its central connotation had been that of "child-centeredness," in that values such as interest, freedom, and self-activity had been stressed. In methods of teaching, learning by doing had been the motto, and a social outlook emphasizing cooperation rather than competition and the worth of the individual had received emphasis.<sup>9</sup> However, he pointed out that the progressives had generally assumed that respect for personality and maximum development could be achieved simply by becoming emancipated from traditional formalism and improving conditions of learning.<sup>10</sup> This assumption, argued Bode, was fallacious.

### A BASIS FOR INTELLECTUAL ORDER

A number of leaders in progressive education agreed with Dewey and Bode in criticizing the child-centered school. They maintained that the pragmatic reliance upon experience must be interpreted to mean the critical, controlled kind of experiencing and learning which is exemplified in science. According to these thinkers, who sometimes used the term *experimentalism* to designate their philosophy of education, neither the intellectuals, the artists, nor the saints have special authority in the modern democratic community. For them, the methods of criticism, full public inspection, and testing become moral principles to guide educational work. Dependable, publicly verified knowledge is to be respected, mastered, and applied to use. Although life is more than a series of scientific operations, all life experiences are to be subjected to critical examination and validation. In the last analysis, the authority of our myths, our poetry, and our ideals must rest upon open, public criticism.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

*Child-centered romanticism modified*

With this re-interpretation of pragmatism to mean reliance upon critical use of intelligence, the romantic individualism of the child-centered school group in the new education movement was modified. Here we have an emphasis upon intellectual rigor. The exponents considered themselves to be pragmatists. Moreover, they remained loyal to and active in the Progressive Education Association. However, within pragmatism and within progressive education there developed important divisions between experimentalists and apostles of the child-centered school. Let us now turn to an examination of the theory and the educational practice advocated by those who considered critical intelligence to be a primary educational ideal.

*Importance of public inspection and test*

In this view, each individual has the right and the obligation to present his insights and his beliefs for public inspection and testing. But individual insights become truth-claims only to the extent that they are validated through public inspection and test. Thus, social institutions that make possible free, open communication and cooperative criticism are indispensable instruments of intelligence. Transmission of dependable truth-claims to the young and cultivation of scientific attitudes and habits are prime educational values. These traits are those which differentiate human behavior from animal trial and error. They are, thus, of primary educational importance.

*Guidance and direction of learning demanded*

The principle at the heart of the child-centered school movement, that of learning through personal experience, is granted. But when the importance of personal experience is emphasized in educational method, there is created a need for guidance and direction of learning which makes the teacher even more important than he was in the traditional school. The task of the



teacher is to guide and direct learning without violating the principle of learning through personal experience. Not every experience is of equal educational value; some experiences restrict rather than extend the possibilities of future growth in learning.<sup>11</sup> Experiences in picking pockets or in injection of heroin are examples. Once more, disconnected experiences not organized in such a way that their interconnections become clear are miseducative. Field trips and casual use of moving pictures for instructional purposes frequently exhibit this weakness. Experiences are educative only when they make possible desirable future experiences. That is, when they are meaningful, so that they make possible greater intelligent control of events in the future.

### *Learning as instrumental*

Learning by experience is never learning in a vacuum. There must always be interaction between an individual learner and certain objective conditions—things and events in his environment. These may be people, toys, materials of an experiment, or imagined persons and things called up by reading, by talk, or by pictures. The point is that an experience is some sort of an interaction between objective conditions and the needs, desires, and purposes of a living being.<sup>12</sup> Now the role of the teacher is to work with the objective conditions that make up learning situations.<sup>13</sup> He works, then, by exercising discriminating choice in setting up learning situations. His responsibility is to set up conditions in the environment of students which will bring about learning—not any learning whatsoever, but that which will have a favorable effect upon the future.<sup>14</sup> To permit free play and individuality, and to foster creative critical inquiry, flexibility is advisable.<sup>15</sup> However, always there must be limits to this flexi-

<sup>11</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), pp. 8-9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

bility, for the function of the school in a free society is to educate for freedom. Men cannot be free except as they are made capable of intelligent, that is discriminating, choice.

### *Intellectual ground of freedom*

People are not actually born free. They achieve freedom as they master intellectual tools that make it possible for them to control their own destinies. These tools are the knowledge and intellectual methods that come out of past experience. Thus, education for freedom demands knowledge of past experience. The tools of freedom come out of past experience as that experience has passed through repeated testings.<sup>16</sup>

The great and awe-inspiring power of a teacher is to manipulate objective conditions to bring about learning. This is the way he works, and society sanctions his exercise of this power. Educational guide-lines are laid down. It is insisted that an educative experience is one that makes for growth, that leads on, and that increases power of control over the future. Such power is freedom. An essential condition of genuine freedom is that it be intelligently exercised. The decisions of the free man are made in the light of past experience and the knowledge coming out of past experience. Hence, a primary concern of a teacher in setting up learning situations will be to see to it that knowledge—that is, useful generalizations built upon the basis of past experience—is used in solving problems.

Thus, the responsible theorists in progressive education were clearly not advocates of random, uncontrolled, unorganized activity in the name of education. Constant critical selection as a responsibility of teachers was emphasized. In fact, Dewey argued at one point that this uncompromising emphasis upon critical selection is the strongest asset of progressive schools.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the

<sup>16</sup> John Dewey, "Individuality and Experience," in A. C. Barnes et al., *Art and Education* (Merion, Pa.: Barnes Foundation Press, 1947), p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*, p. 26.

new experiences must always be connected with what has gone before. Learning must involve organization. Experiences must connect meaningfully with one another. New objects and events must be seen as related to, connected with, and developing out of earlier experiences.

It is a mistake to suppose that the principle of the leading on of experience to something different is adequately satisfied simply by giving pupils some new experiences any more than it is by seeing to it that they have greater skill and ease in dealing with things with which they are already familiar. It is also essential that the new objects and events be related intellectually to those of earlier experiences, and this means that there be some advance made in conscious articulation of facts and ideas. . . . Connectedness in growth must be his [the educator's] constant watchword.<sup>18</sup>

### EDUCATIONAL ORIENTATION

If the position of the systematic philosophers of the New Education has been adequately treated in the preceding exposition, the question may be raised whether they had not, in effect, broken with progressive education. Whence this emphasis upon subject matter? Whence the emphasis on the importance of organizing concepts, of mastery of knowledge? It remains to demonstrate that this view, despite its differences with the child-centered school, remained an educational theory in opposition to conventional education under the continued influence of the literary humanistic tradition.

#### *Human needs as criteria*

The view was that school studies should be based upon needs, but the concept of need was interpreted in a significantly different sense from that in which it was used by educational psychologists, mental hygienists, and specialists in child study. First of all, the limitations and controls inherent in man's external world are to

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

be taken very seriously. Thinking goes on in a context which is not itself constituted out of thought. This is not a subjectivism, making of experience something unrelated to an external world of hard limitations. There are certain "brute existences," as Dewey called them,<sup>19</sup> within which or out of which we live and grow. There is a real external world. From time to time living human beings are involved in incomplete, disturbed, unbalanced situations. A situation may be incomplete if there is an absence of food or drink; it may be disturbed, as in a traffic jam at rush hour; it may be out of balance.

Problem-situations such as these, so the argument goes, constitute needs, and needs call forth the inquiry. Note, however, that *needs* thus conceived are not narrowly personal. Situations become needy; although the human agent is a part of the situation, the needs are not somehow deep down inside the skin of the agent; they are in a situation, not inside the viscera of an organism.

Thus, *problems* are constituted in situations, of which human individuals are a part, but only a part. Now every such situation has a history. Moreover, in a changing, dynamic, evolving world, every such situation is also seen as having a future; it is bound to become something other than it is "right now." This way, *needs*, *needy situations*, and *problem-situations* are conceived dynamically or genetically; that is, as extending through past and present into the future.<sup>20</sup>

### METHOD OF INQUIRY FOR MEETING NEEDS

The position is that needs are properly the basis of education; inquiry has its origin in *need* situations. Any process of inquiry begins, then, within a context whose important elements have

<sup>19</sup> John Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> Dewey, *Logic, the Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Holt, 1938), p. 228.

been set by past events. Thus, there are things to be known about a situation and, to the degree that other human beings have been involved in the situation, cooperative work may be possible—i.e., shared inquiry.<sup>21</sup> The products of inquiry we call *knowledge*. Let us recapitulate: the purpose of education is to meet the needs of people; needs exist in situations, not somehow merely inside people; meeting needs, then, means reconstructing situations; this is accomplished through inquiry; inquiry yields knowledge that is instrumental in further inquiry. How do we inquire? What is the procedure by which we may work fruitfully to meet human needs, to inquire, to gain knowledge?

*First of all, data must be gathered.* Data are useless if they are not appropriate to the realities of the disturbed situation. But they are not exactly the same as the external reality out of which they arise. Data are means to knowledge, not ends. They are the raw material out of which inference is made. Technical as this argument may appear, it has important relevance to educational work. Laying bare the data is basic to inquiry, we are saying. Needs of children can only be met as we get to the data, and until we gather them, we can never get started on a sound educational base. This calls for order, precision, and genuine research. The needs of children and youth can only be met as we use subject matter grounded in competently formulated data to meet them. In other words, there can be no opposition between a concern about careful, competent primary scholarship and "meeting the needs of youth."

*Next, the meanings of data must be developed.* It is in the process of laying bare data, which occurs in problematic or indeterminate situations, that meanings are constructed. Meanings arise as the organism, caught in a needy situation, begins overtly or imaginatively to move around in a situation in an effort to reconstruct it. Such "moving around" is guided by the location of the data, already accomplished in part. Whatever "moving

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

around" occurred prior to location and collection of data was random, unintelligent, not free; it was meaningless. On the other hand, when the "moving around" begins to be guided by data, then meanings and interpretations can arise.

*Knowledge arises out of data and meanings.* Data and meanings applied to reconstruction of a situation—getting out of the traffic jam, securing food or drink—result in knowledge. Thus, it is a total situation which generates or gives rise to needs. Needs are not narrowly personal or private. A disturbed or incomplete situation indicates and brings about the need for an agent to investigate, to plan, and then to test the plan as a way of reorganizing the situation.<sup>22</sup> What we finally call *knowledge* comes out of this sort of need-data-meanings background. What we call knowledge is a body of tested conclusions that have been sifted through past experience. It is based upon data and meanings,<sup>23</sup> and it has been tested by inquirers making use of it in problem-situations. That is, it has been subjected to experimental verification. Responsible inquiry yields conclusions which are to be respected in further inquiries.<sup>24</sup> Now, since all situations have trails into the past, and since living is essentially a social experience, a problem-situation with regard to which absolutely no inquiry has been made is almost inconceivable. Thus, responsible inquiry must grow on a foundation of scholarship. Postulates or principles derived from past inquiry are resources for future inquiries. Professor Dewey maintained that principles—tested ways of doing things coming out of previous inquiry—are *operationally a priori* with respect to further inquiry.<sup>25</sup>

If this be the case, then teachers must indeed be reluctant to set up instructional units that lead students into areas of inquiry for which their lack of knowledge makes them incompetent. If principles are "operationally a priori," serious questions might

<sup>22</sup> Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic*, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Dewey, *Logic, the Theory of Inquiry*, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.



be raised with regard to so-called "experiential units" which ignore the importance of a background in history and theory.

### *Scholarship of instrumental value*

Nevertheless, we do not have here a mere restatement of the classical tradition in education. Human experience, in this view, is looked upon as part of a natural and evolving process. Thought is looked upon as instrumental to human and social well-being, not as a *summum bonum* in itself. The function of the intellectual life is to look into the future and project hypotheses for future action; to speculate about past and present experience is of significance only as hypotheses for future action are to be made. Dynamic reconstruction of a moving present, not perfect description and contemplation of absolute reality, is the ideal. The function of intelligence is to attack problems actually faced by people in living their lives in specific times and places.<sup>26</sup>

This means that the school curriculum should be constructed to treat areas of experience in which there is stress, strain, or imbalance. The criterion in curriculum construction is need. If life adjustment means reconstruction of disturbed situations in life for the maximization of human satisfactions in life, then education for life adjustment is not an improper nor a mean educational goal. We ought to think about the things that need thinking about. The past is gone; the present cannot be other than it is, but we may hope to reconstruct the future to some degree. Problems of the present and hopes for the future fix the content of the school curriculum. The mightiest resource at hand for building a future is in the data, meanings, and knowledge at hand. We select from this fund, which is our heritage from the past, according to present need and our hopes for the future. There is no corpus of subject matter from the past which is somehow sacred. Knowledge is instrumental—instrumental to our present problems and future hopes.

<sup>26</sup> Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Holt, 1920), p. 51.

*Relativity of knowledge*

Of course, this never means that knowledge remains fixed and unaltered. In the process of using knowledge instrumentally, theories are altered and refined. Knowledge coming out of the past is constantly reconstructed in the present. This constant refining through criticism is finally what distinguishes critically grounded meanings from those coming out of day-dreaming or free fantasy.<sup>27</sup> This is to say that experience is meaningful in terms of its background. It is to say that an argument, an idea, or a scientific generalization cannot be understood except for its matrix extending back into the past and involving purposes, interests, and intents of the past which gave rise to it. Moreover, the past renders certain dependable generalizations or tested ideas. These are tools that the inquirer uses in coping with his problem. He is obligated to master these tools—to know these truths, and to respect them. Such truths provide assurance to those in their command. However, they are not absolute and they are not eternal. They are finite, not infinite, and they are always subject to criticism.<sup>28</sup>

This should make clear that experimentalists, although accepting evolution, denying metaphysical absolutes, and applying the pragmatic test, do not deny that certain tested ideas deserve a relatively permanent status. The experimentalist does not advocate that the inquirer adopt a skeptical attitude toward all universals. His is certainly not the view that all results of past inquiry should be open to constant doubt. The point is, rather, that scientific generalizations must be recognized for what they are—products of human inquiry, not to be viewed as eternal revelations. At the same time, the notion is that the relatively permanent conclusions of past inquiry must undergo constant modification and change. New discoveries will constantly im-

<sup>27</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (Chicago: Open Court, 1925), p. 339.

<sup>28</sup> Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (New York: Holt, 1910), pp. 151-52.

pinge upon the body of scientific generalizations. The past runs into the future. Past, present, and future are connected. History does not stop with the present; it moves on into a future in which there are always elements of emerging novelty.<sup>29</sup> The emerging situations are never completely new, but novel elements may exist within them. New situations have trails into the past, but they are new in that there is an unexplored part of them. Principles coming out of past inquiry should be venerated and respected, but even the most respected of truths, respected because they have been dependable, must bear scrutiny in the light of the needs of the present. It is only relatively that they are unchanging. The oldest and most dependable of truths are to some extent remade as they are used instrumentally in coping with current problems.<sup>30</sup>

### Summary

The purpose of this somewhat technical analysis of the position of philosophers of the New Education concerning knowledge and scholarship has been to counter the widespread stereotype of pragmatism as characterized by scholarly irresponsibility.\* It must be granted that there has been a strong iconoclastic bent in the pragmatic movement. Dewey, Kilpatrick, Childs, and Counts have been leaders among liberals in twentieth century America. Nevertheless, an important and recurring aspect of the system of thought which inspired these men has been conservation in the name of continuity. Dewey makes this most clear in the work *Experience and Education*, to which frequent references have been made in preceding pages. The book is a severe indictment of the individualistic excesses of the child-centered school.

As viewed by philosophers of the New Education, the popular slogans of the activity-school movement failed to provide criteria for distinguishing between more and less worthy learning experiences. There is strong criticism of teachers who follow momentary and passing interests of students in the name of "progressivism." This is

<sup>29</sup> Dewey, *Logic, the Theory of Inquiry*, p. 501.

<sup>30</sup> Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, p. 152.

a gross distortion of the meaning of criticism and scientific method in education.

The view is that problems arise out of the past, and that data, meanings, and knowledge coming from past inquiry must be brought to bear on problems of the present. Every situation extends through past, present, and future. Because a situation is thus continuous through time, the situation cannot be understood except as its history, including data and meanings, is known:

1. The situation as it now exists is a product of the past.
2. The meanings and data are products of the past.
3. Every situation confronted in the present is a product of the past; hypotheses for future action must, then, take careful account of past experience, since the present is only intelligible in terms of the past.
4. Thus any and every inquiry must be based upon disciplined, methodical historical study and upon thorough knowledge of conclusions of scientific inquiry having a bearing upon the problem at hand.

It is the present situation, however, which gets our concern. The past is to be used by us; it is not to master us. Inquiry is to be directed to present problems; our concern is with the use and meaning of experience. Despite their differences, all the progressives have agreed that the real purpose of education is to enable the young to cope with the problems of the present and future. The traditional school is to be criticized, not because of its stress on subject matter, but because of its too frequent failure to relate subject matter to present and future problems.

Traditionalists in education have insisted that what has been useful in the past must be most useful in the future. Accordingly, they have set up the school studies to perpetuate, preserve, and extend a fixed body of traditional lore. On the other hand, the child-centered progressivists, in their absorption with the growth and development of individual children, have tended to ignore the social past and to discount the importance of systematic knowledge. The latter may well be closer to realization of important educational values for a free society than the former. It must be recognized, however, that the only tools we have for coping with problems of life adjustment in the present are those tools which the past has provided.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*, pp. 92-93,

The choice, then, is not to revert to the "eternal values" of the traditionalists in setting up educational standards. Nor will the choice be to romanticize the art experience and advocate that a bureaucracy of artists be set up to exercise social control through a unique and mystical method of "creative thought." In full recognition of contingencies in life, painstaking gathering of data, searching of the past for the origins of problems, and projecting of hypotheses for future action when pertinent meanings have been surveyed will be guiding educational principles. The formulation of plans and the testing of their effects are activities in which all may share, for the method of critical intelligence demands full publicity and open testing by all comers.

Teachers are advised to stress the problematic, contingent, changing nature of reality and to encourage boys and girls to come to terms with a dynamic, ever-changing universe.\* At the same time, in this view, they will teach that thorough acquaintance with fundamental data and meanings, and knowledge of tested results of previous inquiry are prerequisite to problem-solving. They will see to it that the young are provided with necessary intellectual means for problem-solving as problems are presented. They will be forever on guard against careless, unscientific, irresponsible thinking not grounded in mastery of data, meanings, and knowledge pertinent to the problems at hand.

### Notes

p. 213 "... human intelligence . . . the one best hope for coming generations . . ."

The intended implication in this chapter and in those which follow is that a theory has in fact been at work as a guide to policy in American public education. It may be asked, however, "Have teachers and administrators in the school always deliberately and self-consciously guided themselves by this theory?" The reply, of course, must be in the negative. But does this invalidate the claim that the theory has been at work? Not so. A broker works with economic theory as he conducts his business. A salesman works with a theory of human relations as he makes his living. This does not mean that every decision made by the individual is made as the

conclusion of a syllogism the major premise of which can be stated precisely upon call. The relationship between practice and theory does not depend completely upon the psychological awareness of individuals doing the practicing; for theories become involved in the ways of institutions and cultures so that they are dramatized in action even when not stated precisely. In fact, it may well be that theories become most powerful in the affairs of men as they move into this "subliminal" intellectual realm. They are there; they guide action; they make a difference. However, only upon deliberate and disciplined reflective analysis can they be located and stated.

- p. 217 "*. . . responsible . . . conceptions of what schools ought to be doing . . .*"

A responsible proposal which can be taken and held to as a guide to a policy and program of action may well gain fierce opposition, inasmuch as it does constitute a plan that, if carried through, would make a significant difference in the affairs of men. That is, it is capable of operation. But irresponsible proposals are opposed as either silly or dishonest. That some proposals for educational policy have been silly might be admitted. That some have been dishonest cannot be clearly demonstrated.

- p. 231 "*. . . to counter the widespread stereotype of pragmatism as characterized by scholarly irresponsibility*"

The writing and teaching of those who prepare teachers has been much more self-consciously related to the scholarship discussed in this chapter than has the writing and teaching of workers in the public elementary and secondary schools. Practitioners characteristically become immersed in the administration of the discipline or art and frequently lose touch with the origins of the ways which they are perfecting. Even in the professional schools preparing teachers, there has been inadequate attention to the development and refinement of the theoretical bases of education, and an unfortunate tendency to overemphasize inadequately understood slogans.

- p. 233 *"Teachers are advised to . . . encourage boys and girls to come to terms with a dynamic, ever-changing universe."*

Conservatives argue vigorously against this, maintaining that individual sanity and social stability depend upon recognition and acceptance of certain unchanging truths. See, to the contrary, John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1929); also Eric Fromm, *Man for Himself* (New York: Rinehart, 1947). Dewey and Fromm hold that it is possible for men to come to terms with a universe of change.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# The New Education— Values, Standards, & Moral Implications

IN THE PRECEEDING chapter the importance of knowledge in the theory of the New Education has been emphasized. Inasmuch as problems are tackled intelligently only as significant data, meanings, and knowledge are used, great attention must be given in schools to mastery of important data, meanings, and knowledge. Responsible progressives would emphasize as strongly as traditionalists that students must master knowledge. The distinctions come at the point of selecting the items of knowledge which are to be mastered, and in relating the total educational enterprise to the field of reliable knowledge. Thus, the frequently voiced criticism that pragmatism in educational theory advocates carelessness and irresponsible expediency in scholarship must be discounted.

A more substantial and well-grounded criticism of pragmatic educational theory is that it fails to deal adequately with morality. The emphases upon criticism and testing, so it is argued, are appropriate to fact-finding, but not to the discovery and preservation of values. Furthermore, the assertion is made that pragmatism provides a way of expediting action once you know what you want to do, but that it gives no adequate directions as to how you



establish critically what you want. Critics maintain that this philosophy places all human wants on the same level, failing to grapple adequately with the problem of determining which things are more worth-while than others.

In technical philosophy, much attention has been given to considering whether a scientific, operational philosophy can deal with values. Logicians argue whether an "ought" can ever be validated experimentally, and attempt to reduce "ought" questions to "is" questions.\* The relationship of values to interests has been explored, and some effort has been made by scientific philosophers to reduce value questions to questions of human interests. Rarely have these technical discussions been refined to make their meanings clear in educational operations. Yet teachers working with children and young people in schools give much of their attention to teaching youngsters not facts but moral norms. "You *ought* not to run in the halls! You *should* complete your home work! Every American *should* love his country! Human life *must* be held sacred! You *should* tell the truth!"

Now if science deals with facts but not with values, although the scientific comprises the realm within which education should do its work, what supports these moral teachings? Sentimentality? Custom? As teachers work to impart scientific habits of mind in the young, the young cannot be expected to refrain from raising critical questions about the values. However, when we teach them to criticize everything, to subject all assertions to critical test, inspection, and experiment, and to hold all propositions tentatively, subject to alteration with the appearance of new evidence, the moral codes will also be questioned. Thus, why should we respect human life, tell the truth, cooperate, or support the Constitution? These questions will be asked in a school that dedicates itself to teaching young people to be critically intelligent.

It may appear that moral sanctions finally have their ground only in some form of self-interest. To be sure, self-interest can

be extended to include interests of "my family," "my race," my clan," and "my country," but whether a scientific humanist can extend self-interest to include all of mankind may be a moot question. Nevertheless, it would appear that the ground of morality in a secular school must finally be "man for himself," as Erich Fromm has put it.<sup>1</sup> Then is there any reason—other than sentimentalism—why one should live a life of pain and suffering for all mankind? Perhaps one can critically establish the advisability of ten or twenty years of pain and suffering for others, with the promise that the joys will eventually be greater as the investment in pain contributes to a group enterprise from which one will profit. In this view, however, there would appear to be no ground for an ultimate personal sacrifice in the name of a cause greater than oneself.

### MORAL FERVOR OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

Paradoxically, it would appear that progressive education involved a moral fervor which has rarely been matched in the long history of education. How can this be, when the philosophy supporting it appears to elevate self-interest to such a high plane? One explanation has been that teachers who joined the movement were ladies who loved children but who had none of their own; thus, the romantic conception of childhood expressed in the maxims of the child-centered school captured them. Another suggestion has been that the moral fervor of the movement is derived from Christianity; i.e., that a fundamentally Christian morality of love carried over, as a phenomenon in cultural lag, when the metaphysical dimension of Christianity had been discarded.\* That Bode and Dewey came out of Calvinistic Christianity and that some of their more eminent interpreters were men reared in evangelical Protestantism are cited as examples.

What these suggestions fail to take into consideration is the

<sup>1</sup> Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (New York: Rinehart, 1947).

understandable devotion that men have demonstrated in various ages to the cause of human freedom. Progressive education at its best has a place in the liberal tradition. It stands for intellectual and moral freedom, a freedom which takes form as men forge their own criteria for judgment out of their experience in living. The moral fervor involved in such a movement is generated out of compassion for man's fellows, indignation at the forces that oppress them, and a clear vision of the means of their deliverance.\*

### THE GREAT GOODS— INTELLIGENCE, FREEDOM, AND DEMOCRACY

The most impressive rejoinder to criticisms of pragmatism and progressive education as involving a moral vacuum comes from educational theorists who see connections among science, freedom, and democracy. They find an ultimate ground for morality in those methods and institutions which make possible realization of human values by human beings. They grant that it is the earthly joys and satisfactions which count, but they find it possible to dedicate themselves critically to the means of their preservation. That is, the critically established cause—a cause somehow greater than self-interest—comes to be the cause of preserving and extending those social methods and institutional forms that enable man to be "for himself." This cause is the method of disciplined intelligence.\* Ground for devotion to it is the empirical evidence of its fruitfulness in producing joys for people like ourselves. The method of critical intelligence is viewed as a way human beings have of working together. If this be the case—if the critical method is a way of accepting one another, working with one another, listening to one another, watching one another—then it must have moral significance. If this be the case, then it may well be that educators can find a fruitful, dynamic scheme of educational values built on the content and method of intellectual criticism.

*Democratic method*

The method of criticism is seen as the method of democracy. That is, it is the method of free, open examination, with decisions always subject to revision on the basis of overt test. It is the method of science, broadly construed.<sup>2</sup> It is to be skeptical, critical, and open-minded; it is to accept as true or reliable only that which is demonstrated openly, publicly, honestly, and obviously.<sup>3</sup> Faith in human intelligence thus broadly construed has been the faith of modern educators. That is, they have been passionately devoted to inquiry, criticism, and experiment—to systematic, careful, alert, unprejudiced observation and testing. In other words, for them human intelligence has been the supreme authority and prime educational value. The basis for giving intelligence this pre-eminent position is that it has been more fruitful in producing richer lives for more people than any other method.

*Commitment to intelligence*

A great moral commitment is involved in the faith that intelligence is the prime educational value. It is a commitment to the view that systematic, controlled, unprejudiced observation and experimentation, subject to critical testing by all comers, is better than unsystematic, careless, uncontrolled, biased procedures claiming special authority rather than resting on critical inspection by all. Truths thus established always have a provisional status. They rest upon public acceptance by individuals whose criterion of acceptance is the evidence of experimental testing. Verification by others is not something grudgingly tolerated. It is a positive, constructive, necessary element in the making of truth. It is a protection against hallucination and vagary. It is the process by which truth is created; but this process is never completed, for verification by individuals comprising an unlimited com-

<sup>2</sup> Sidney Hook, *Education for Modern Man* (New York: Dial, 1946), pp. 128-29.

<sup>3</sup> John Dewey, "Antinaturalism in Extremis," in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, ed. Y. H. Krikorian (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 12.

munity would be the condition for complete establishment of a proposition's truth-claim.

## THE GOOD SOCIETY

Political and social institutions rest on the same foundation as truths. They rest upon public acceptance by individuals whose criteria of acceptance have been criticized. Just as no particular truth-claim has a privileged status, so no political or social institution is good in itself. Just as a truth-claim may continue to serve in the absence of negative or unproductive instances of its application, so a political or social institution may be used as an instrument so long as it actually continues to serve. This is true of democratic institutions. While democracy as a method is correlated with the method of intelligence, specific institutions and specific social forms are open to continuous criticism, inspection, and revision. The democratic faith, in this view, is simply faith in intelligence; it does not attach itself to any particular form or organization.

At the same time, as dependable, usable truth-claims are treasured for their instrumental value while recognized as constantly subject to change, so dependable, usable political and social institutions are appreciated as tools. But we are the masters; we pass judgment on institutions. Human institutions are to be judged and controlled by human intelligence; there is no form of social organization whatsoever which is above or beyond criticism.

### *Importance of community\**

The ground for holding that all men should participate in criticism and decision-making in a democracy is the recognition that all men have something to contribute to the process of criticism. Since the view is that there are no absolutely fixed or permanent truths, human beings are both subjects and objects in the working out of social-scientific generalizations. That is, every proposal

for social action proposes modes of association among individual human beings. Thus, each individual is a part of the material of the experiment. However, since the consequences of the experiment—where people are involved—can be measured only by human satisfactions and dissatisfactions, each individual must also be one of the experimenters, recorders, and reporters. Since social experimentation extends through time, it becomes extremely important that all men remain free to speak honestly and freely, and to record and publicize their reactions.

### *Importance of free communication*

Here we have a powerful justification for freedom of speech and press, and a strong argument against censorship. Seen this way, when we refuse to hear men speak or when we forbid circulation of what they have written, we hurt ourselves. Since truth is wrought out of human experience, a continuing refining edge in the building of truth is the voice of the dissenter. Actually, he is extremely important to us; he helps us discover where the ideas and institutions we are using are weak. The spoken or recorded word coming from the dissenter is like pain in the body. He is unpleasant; he disturbs us; but he lets us know where there may be weakness or incipient social disease.

Of course, the process of governing ourselves is inexact. The effort to manage human affairs intelligently is always hampered by the inescapable personal equations of observers (the prejudices and vested interests of legislators and voters). There is the muddling of records (editorial policies of newspapers and piques of reporters). There is the elusiveness of subject matter (How many Communists were there in the State Department?). But these are difficulties that every scientist faces; we always work with imperfect and incomplete tools. The advantages in the method of intelligence inhere in the frank recognition that this is so, and the consequent continued effort to improve tools recognized as imperfect.

## MORAL CANONS OF THE METHOD OF INTELLIGENCE

If it is good to be intelligent and thus free, then there is a method of intelligence to which we must cleave in order to preserve freedom. Beginning with the commitment to intelligence as a supreme moral value, we derive certain "oughts" for personal conduct and for education as we examine what it really means to be intelligent.

### *The value of the human community*

First of all, a man cannot be intelligent all alone. The method of intelligence is social in nature. A generalization simply is not a generalization if it holds "for me alone." Reliable generalizations, then, are those that hold for a large number of people occupying places in time, space, and class. The extension of the community is the mission of intelligence, and it is also of the very substance of intelligence. The point is that the safety, security, and happiness of each person depend upon persisting critical sensitivity to the appearance of negative, unproductive instances in the use of generalizations. Every human being may make some contribution to the testing of all generalizations. Since the biological make-up, environment, personality, and position in time and space of each individual in history, in the present, and in the future are unique, each individual represents a unique dimension of intelligence. He can criticize from his point of view—from his position. Thus he can make his contribution to human intelligence.

### *The demands of the humane community*

There is a sense in which this way of thinking of human intelligence—as a great community enterprise—makes human life valuable. If life is precious for this reason, it immediately follows that a moral commitment to education and the provision of

health and welfare services is involved. If people are valuable because of the contribution they make to the community of intelligence, this contribution is to be maximized in world-wide efforts to support and nurture their contributions. However, this effort is seen as extending through time, through an unlimited community. Here is the suggestion of a kind of brotherhood among men of all ages—the suggestion that all are engaged in the cooperative task of seeking truth. Having forsaken metaphysical presuppositions holding for absolute, completed truths, we must look upon the human community as our one best source of wisdom. We need each other desperately in a world in which cooperative inquiry is seen as the primary source of dependable principles to guide action.

It may also be pointed out that in this conception of social democracy, status is a function of earned esteem. An insight that stands the test of action is of value regardless of its source. Race and lineage are of no account in the method of intelligence. Conversely, even the wisest and the most farseeing of men must recognize how limited and fallible his concepts are, and how minute his own personal contributions have been. His wisdom is the wisdom of the community that nurtures him, and his wisdom is constantly confounded by new insights coming from his peers. The point is that in this way of thinking of human intelligence, we have the ground for an ethic of equality and of personal humility. There is here the suggestion of a kind of awe or even reverence for the community which extends through time and to which one is both an heir and a contributor.

Finally, we may point out the tremendous emphasis upon honesty and integrity in reporting, which is a part of the democratic-scientific ethic. Accuracy is a virtue; deliberate falsification makes one a traitor to his fellows and to himself. One must tell the truth, for only thus can others learn from him and can he be true to the ideals that have made him and that sustain his freedom.



## MORAL PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING

How, then, are moral values to be taught in the secular school? What does all this mean for the establishment of guiding value commitments? What faith remains to sustain boys and girls, and men and women in times of crisis?

*Loyalty to and respect for intelligence*

There is the loyalty to and respect for intelligence as that which is so admirable, honorable, and approvable that it is to be preserved and extended. This becomes a supreme educational value, because it is the means by which goods are created and recreated. It is the on-going method for making and remaking the good life among men. This is not to say, of course, that it is the only method which has in the past rendered large satisfactions to human beings. Pigs have been roasted as houses have burned; wars have created national heroes and great literature; beautiful music and art have been inspired by authoritarian dogma. However, the method of intelligence is that method which thrives on creation of human goods. It is the method most fruitful and dependable in the long run. Thus, it becomes of supreme educational value, and educational practices that make for growth in intelligence are deemed indispensable.

*Critical respect for tradition*

This is not to say that enjoyment of intellectual experiences is itself the only enjoyment. Enjoyments are many and various, and every enjoyment is, as such, a good. Each of us may find within himself instances of happy consummations which appear to have come from non-intelligent methods and sources. We may have solved a problem by doing uncritically what a fortune-teller told us to do. We may have integrated a disorganized section of our life by applying an insight derived from classical doctrines. We may have been inspired by an apparently intuitive, artistic ex-

perience. It cannot be denied that individualistic or authoritarian methods sometimes render consummatory experiences of richness and satisfaction.

Thus, in work with the young, there is a sense in which respect and generosity toward the various sources of traditional wisdom are to be taught. Nevertheless, in a spirit of gentleness and humility, criticism of these non-scientific insights must not only be encouraged but also be demanded. Otherwise, the claim to supreme authority of propositions uttered by special persons may remain unchallenged. Today, evidence from psychology, sociology, and anthropology appears to establish the dominant role of the culture in supplying standards. The existence of inborn or *a priori* moral or metaphysical categories has apparently been disproved. When this conception is taken seriously, it must immediately be recognized that a pragmatic individualism which advocates that men draw upon whatever methods and authorities the whim of the moment suggests is unsound. It leaves out of consideration the fact that the very minds with which men make their choices are structured by the systems of belief in which they have been nurtured.

### *Disciplines of critical intelligence*

Thus, it is not possible for the moral teacher in a secular school to be fully acceptant of all sources of authority to which his students may turn. A central concern of the school must be to supply and develop value conceptions that provide dependable working standards by which choices most likely to issue in happy consequences are to be made. The task is one of structuring minds—the concern, to determine what system of values provides the most adequate foundation for strong minds. The scientific, experimental, secular humanism here under discussion as an educational theory holds that minds constituted by loyalty and adherence to critical methods are, in the long run, most blessed. This is because the critical method is most productive of hu-

man goods of all sorts. Children and youth thus educated must survey with sympathy and appreciation the assertions and records of assertions coming from authoritarian and non-critical sources. The critical mind, however, in contrast to the authoritarian or non-critical mind, will arrive at choices experimentally, making use of technological information and philosophical analysis.

A school dedicated to development of intelligence as a prime educational value will use every technique of pedagogy not in contradiction with the faith in intelligence to inculcate the moral traits involved in the method of intelligence. Moral virtues will indeed be viewed as a central part of the concern of free, public, non-sectarian education. Specific moral habits and attitudes will be encouraged in the young, but the morality will be a secular, public, non-sectarian morality.

### *Disciplines of firmness and restraint in controversy*

Since the morality of intelligence and democracy, as outlined above, does have a clear cutting edge, undoubtedly any school dedicated to this morality will frequently be subjected to community criticism. Existence of individuals and blocs within communities purposefully advocating private and uncritical commitments in preference to public, critical problem-solving is likely to be the rule rather than the exception. Although the position of the school must be uncompromising in its dedication to the free mind, it must always be remembered that a means which, when challenged, moves contrary to the end for which it is advanced is dubious. Certainly if freedom is endangered by the operation of authoritarian groups within society, it is lost indeed when members of the community of intelligence become authoritarian in the name of freedom.

### *Use of force as a last resort*

Children and youth in the schools should be taught that the method of intelligence must remain true to itself. Use of force is

the ultimate indication of failure of intelligence. If there is a justifiable use of force, it may be to see to it that authoritarian groups submit their propositions for public inspection rather than be allowed to maintain secrecy. So long as an authoritarian group allows its books to remain open, democratic persuasion rather than force is always to be preferred. Thus young people in the schools, while being taught the morality of criticism, must always be reminded of the dignity of dissent, even when the dissent comes close to the roots of the faith to which the school is dedicated.

Children and young people in the schools will, therefore, be constantly reminded that resort to coercion, force, subterfuge, or deliberate "shading" of test-results to oppose authoritarian groups falsifies the faith of the community of intelligence. The young may be taught that the greatest evil is concerted, organized effort to discredit the method of intelligence in favor of some authoritarian method. Political maneuvering by any group which involves deliberate weighting of evidence in favor of some pre-conceived and invulnerable point of view is wrong. Use of force must always remain suspect, and its only possible justification as a mode of deliberate political action is to secure evidence withheld.

### *Summary*

In summary, the educational platform of those for whom critical intelligence is the educational ideal defines human inquiry as problem-solving activity. Problems arising out of situations continuous with the past are to be confronted by the use of certain intellectual tools or instruments. These instruments include data, meanings, results of past inquiry, and human institutions which make possible communication and testing of hypotheses. Complex problems may be recognized and attacked only as data, meanings, and funded knowledge are mastered. Educational efforts will involve laborious and careful surveys of fields of knowledge to acquaint persons with data, meanings, and results of past inquiry essential for their activities

as creative members of a democratic community dedicated to intelligence. Conceivably, years of study devoted to mastery of instruments of intelligence may be necessary before creative problem-solving activity can be undertaken in a given area. Sound analysis of the method of intelligence by no means issues in support of an educational practice lacking order and rigor. Individuals must be thoroughly acquainted with pertinent data and meanings before they can sense problems, locate them by intelligent analysis, and proceed to construct hypotheses for their solution.

Again, the canons of the critical method are specific, definable moral values. These canons, plus the results of inquiry in human-social fields having values for man, comprise ethical generalizations and make up the moral code. The items of this code are authoritative, and the young are to be nurtured in respect for their authority. They have authority because they are essential contributory means to intelligence.

### Notes

p. 237 ". . . whether an 'ought' can ever be validated experimentally . . ."

A wide range of criticisms may be directed at the position taken in this chapter, i.e., that that way of solving problems called the *scientific* or *democratic* way involves a set of procedural rules—a manual—which is *ipso facto* a moral code. A familiar cliché is that science gives only means not ends, and that the scientific method itself is morally neutral—it can as well be used for foul ends as for good. But this presumes a situation in which the end is set up non-intelligently. Will not thoroughgoing critical analysis of the foul end proposed exhibit its foulness?

p. 238 ". . . that a fundamentally Christian morality of love carried over . . ."

Thus, the claim that a morality is involved in the method of critical intelligence is interpreted as reading into science the Judaic-Christian morality. To the contrary, it is claimed, the morality is not inherent in the method, but is falsely seen to

be in the method by those who unconsciously carry along into their analysis of it the moral traditions of Western civilization.

p. 239 *"The moral fervor involved in such a movement . . ."*

Some would agree that a morality is involved in critical intelligence applied in thoroughgoing fashion, but would hold that these methodological sanctions fail to enlist a warm and loyal attachment from men. They believe that some sort of fixed loyalty is demanded in order to ensure social stability. Thus, they consider that the Judaic-Christian tradition, or ideals of American democracy, or some sort of universally celebrated declaration of the rights of man is demanded as a supreme moral authority. Apparently they hold that there must finally be a source of moral inspiration which is not itself taken as subject to continuous review and criticism. Occasionally, it has been suggested that to make of the method of science and democracy a moral end is to try to make an absolute of the method. Thus, the suggestion that loyalty to critical intelligence is simply another competing orthodoxy. Those who disagree maintain that the method of critical intelligence is a method that carries within itself the means for its own self-correction.

p. 239 *"... the method of disciplined intelligence."*

A highly significant technical approach to the development of the moral dimension in educational work has been developed by Professor R. Bruce Raup and associates. Raup considers that it is possible to locate and define a discipline of practical judgment which is uniquely relevant to moral decisions or "normative judgment." The classic work in which the basis of this theory is developed is R. Bruce Raup, Kenneth D. Benne, George E. Axtelle, and B. Othanel Smith, *The Improvement of Practical Intelligence* (New York: Harper, 1950).

p. 241 *"Importance of community"*

Professor Raup stresses the importance of the "community of persuasion" in moral judgment, and takes the position

## CHAPTER      FOURTEEN

# Religion and Public Education in an Open Society

IN THE PUBLIC school in a democratic, open society, there must be an unbending insistence upon the supreme value of the method of intelligence. This means full, open, public criticism of all matters of common human concern. It is difficult to see how the American public school could become a confessional school and remain public. It is in the faith in free, critical human intelligence that secular educators see common ground for public education in a free society.

At the same time, a feature of the open society is its toleration of many different ideologies and points of view. In other words, in a democratic society, people who in varying degrees advocate undemocratic ways are accepted as members of the community. Children of these people attend the public schools, and in the school dedicated to the method of critical intelligence, the values, commitments, and beliefs on the basis of which various social groups are currently attacking problems should be studied. The young should be made aware of values and commitments that influence the behavior of various groups within the society, whether or not these values and commitments are themselves critically established. To put it

another way, education intended to foster critical intelligence ought to involve teaching the young about uncritical, non-scientific, non-rational forces operating within the society.

Thus in the public school, teachers must see to it that the young grow up fully aware of the traditions, folkways, and mores of their society. Such knowledge and acquaintance is demanded by an educational practice that views command of meanings as instrumentally important in arriving at critically valid conclusions. This way, the young are to be taught in public school to view traditions, folkways and mores, religious doctrines and liturgies, works of art, and literature as instruments rather than finally established ends in themselves. The public school as defined here is the institution which makes loyalty to and faith in criticism, experiment, public inspection, and group deliberation the highest loyalty and the deepest faith. Ideas are seen as instruments for resolving difficulties. By their use, problematic situations are transformed so that difficulties which gave rise to inquiry in the first place are removed. All sorts of problems or difficulties give rise to inquiry. The inquiring which goes on, involving ideas as instruments, is an experience that mediates among other experiences (the latter being experiences which constitute a problem). The aim is to resolve the difficulty; resolution of the difficulty means that a new immediate experience of enjoyment or satisfaction has emerged. The reason why it is maintained that the end of educational endeavor is development of intelligence is that consummations cannot be established and securely held aside from persisting concern about the means that produce consummations and fulfillments. Thus, intelligent living is rich in enjoyment and fulfillment because intelligent living is living alert to the conditions by which joys of living are established and extended.

The faith represented by the public school in an open society is that maximal enjoyment of life in all its myriad forms is to be established and secured by intelligent rather than non-intelli-



gent means and methods. Intelligent living makes full use of meanings and knowledge coming out of past inquiry and gives loyalty to the moral canons of the method of intelligence. The primary job of the public school, in this view, is to foster and develop critical intelligence in the young. Not the least important reason for loyalty to the critical method as supreme authority is that adherence to it does not circumscribe or limit the field of human enjoyment. It represents a morality that points toward the future rather than toward the past. It expresses a philosophy that minimizes authority and insists that authority when exercised must be public rather than private, and functional and dynamic rather than static and absolute.

Public school teachers in their professional capacities must be dedicated to this cause. It is in this sense, then, that teachers cannot be neutral. They are obligated to take positions, in the name of free inquiry, so that their insights and their conclusions may be subjected to the wide-open critical investigation for which the public school stands. The orthodoxy which the public school represents is the unequivocal dedication to the free human mind. Such a dedication demands that public school teachers, in their professional capacities as teachers, must stand firm against pressures to modify or relinquish their critical function. In other words, the school is open to all views, but with the all-important qualification that all views must be subjected to unrestrained critical examination. Here is the problem of religion and public education. If religion means being bound to a faith uncritically, then the method of religion and the method of intelligence are in conflict.\*

### REASON AND FAITH IN THE WESTERN RELIGIONS

There are two reasons why the conflict between science and faith has been less severe in the West than in some Eastern cultures. In the first place, in contrast to some of the great world religions, Judaism and Christianity have always stressed the importance of

human reason and have insisted that reason has some part to play in revelation. In the second place, particularly within the last century or two, large groups of Jews and Christians have broken with supernatural versions of their respective faiths and have developed natural interpretations for many of the traditional doctrines. Thus, some have interpreted religious experience as aesthetic experience and have, in turn, attempted to explain aesthetic experience as grounded in biological and social factors.

Liberal, or "modernistic" religion has been viewed by some religious leaders as a productive and vigorous way to preserve religious tradition in a scientific milieu. Other religionists have looked upon modernism in religion as a dangerous and demagogic sophistry. Orthodox religionists have suggested that religious "liberals" are misguided romantics, partial thinkers, or moral cowards. It has been suggested that they either accept the traditional supernaturalism of the church or synagogue, or break forthrightly with religion.

With the very recent twentieth century attacks upon secularism, to which reference has been made in preceding chapters in terms of the public school controversy, there has been some revival of interest in liberal religion on the part of some naturalists and pragmatists.\* The effort has been to develop conceptions of "natural" or "scientific" religion. Thus in educational literature, the John Dewey Society published a work entitled *The Public Schools and Spiritual Values*<sup>1</sup> and the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association issued a report on *Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools*.<sup>2</sup> In these works, untraditional definitions of religion are presented, and it is argued that religion can be relativistic, experi-

<sup>1</sup> John S. Brubacher, ed. and others, *The Public Schools and Spiritual Values*, Seventh Yearbook, John Dewey Society (New York: Harper, 1944)

<sup>2</sup> Educational Policies Commission, *National Education Association, Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools* (Washington: National Education Association, 1951).

mental, non-authoritarian, and democratic. Traditional supernaturalists might conclude that contradictions in terms are involved in this argument, for some would consider that the substantive meaning of religion includes worship of an eternal God and complete dedication to His laws for man, revealed in a Holy Book and celebrated in churches and synagogues.

Whether the move to capture religious terminology and incorporate so-called religion within relativistic, naturalistic outlooks should be more or less objectionable to orthodox Christians and Jews than the uncompromising secularism of pragmatists like Boyd Bode is a question worth pondering. It may well be that a clear and precise division of labor among social institutions is a protection of the integrity of those institutions. Orthodox religionists and uncompromising secularists have frequently agreed that the domain of religion is not the domain of the public school. Perhaps church and school are dedicated to different and even competing ideals. Perhaps the very health and vitality of an open society depend upon just this sort of pluralism among institutions within the democratic community.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, with all due respect to religious experience and the important ways in which religion has met needs of people in times of trouble and sadness, there remains some persisting conflict between free critical intelligence as a supreme educational ideal and the claims of traditional religion. The method of critical intelligence would demand that propositions for which the religionist claims a supernatural source be tested like any other propositions. This way, tests of proposals for educational practice are tests of the social effects of the practices. It is asserted that terms and propositions for which operational tests cannot be designated are meaningless. Thus, operationally, "religion is what religion does," and in this way to evaluate the mean-

<sup>3</sup> In this connection, the tendency of Baptists—generally considered to be a group in which fundamentalism is strong—to support separation of church and state by advocating clear separation of church and public school, is an example.

ing and value of religion in life is to observe and test the operation of religious institutions in the society. The church and synagogue are seen as the institutional expressions of religion. Inasmuch as religion in its institutionalized forms has sometimes been a divisive influence in society, secularists make the judgment that a danger of religion in a democratic society is its divisiveness.

Those who insist that free critical intelligence must be upheld without compromise as the highest educational value understand that religion and the pursuit of wisdom have not been mutually exclusive in the Western world. But as they see it, too many times in the history of Western civilization those who have claimed love of wisdom in the name of religion have turned love into hate, becoming advocates not of the eternal pursuit of wisdom but of special propositions in which they claim to have found its final end. Thus the love of wisdom under God has become a prideful bigotry, the fruits of which have turned the spirit of love into the seeds of a lust for power with the sword as its expression. The exponent of critical intelligence as a prime educational value would insist that all propositions, whatever their source, rest upon critical, experimental validation. The realm of the human and the empirical is seen as the realm in which all propositions must be tested and retested.

Secular educators, then, respect and value religion in many of its aspects. However, when religion as a force in society supports authoritarian, non-empirical, dogmatic pronouncements, religion can only be viewed as a threat to education, a bulwark of arbitrary power rather than critically exercised freedom.

### RELIGION AND CRITICAL INTELLIGENCE: POINTS OF CONFLICT

#### *Source of authority*

Church and synagogue organizations are led by priests, ministers, and rabbis. The officials make up a professional group—the

clergy. Pronouncements of these officials are always taken very seriously by members of the groups that they head. Moreover, the positions these leaders take on public issues are seen as positions supported by members of the religious groups that they represent. Now inasmuch as churches and synagogues claim to be institutions made up of those in close touch with the divine source of all wisdom, pronouncements of leaders of these groups always partake of an aura of special authority. In the Roman Catholic Church, certain pronouncements of certain members of the hierarchy are taken as binding upon members of the Church. Protestants and Jews insist that no pronouncements of their clergy are binding. Nevertheless, like the priest, the rabbi or minister is finally seen as a holy man to some degree. He is one who has consecrated himself to the Divine. In his professional capacity he represents a divinely ordained institution and, therefore, his words carry a special claim.

On the other hand, in a democratic, open society dedicated to free, critical intelligence, people supposedly criticize the words of men by testing the effects of the actions proposed by the words, whatever the social status of those who utter them. In schools dedicated to the development of critical intelligence, will the young be taught that the pronouncements of men of God are to be criticized in the same way as the pronouncements of other men? This is an educational problem posed by the special role of the clergy in a democratic society.

#### *Attitude toward commitment*

The relative importance and specificity of creed varies tremendously among religious groups. Moreover, it is certain that within Protestantism and Judaism, at least, church and synagogue groups are held together as much by the social experiences they provide for people as by the world view for which they stand. All this having been said, however, it appears that the very *raison d'être* of a religious group is to celebrate a particular way of viewing

the world and man's destiny in it. One joins the church, then, ultimately because he wants to join *this way of looking at the world*. Now, inasmuch as the fundamental purpose of the institution is to celebrate this way of looking at the world, what happens when, in the light of further critical thinking and examination, this way of looking at the world is questioned? It may appear that one is questioning the very foundation of the institution. Heterodoxy is a deeply disturbing problem in a religious group, for heterodoxy is not the same as disagreement about policy in a secular organization. The doctrine is the foundation of the religious organization. When the doctrine is challenged, the institution itself is being questioned.

Looking at the church and synagogue as social institutions, the peculiar social function of both seems to be that of furthering an ideology. Various social and welfare functions are also served by these institutions as collateral services, but the uniqueness of a religious group as a social institution is its ideology. Thus, it may be considered that any particular institutionalized group—any congregation—stands for or is an exponent of the ideology. Furthermore, it is considered that apparent deviations of individual members of congregations cannot be unrestricted. As long as an individual retains his membership in the congregation, so the reasoning goes, his thinking—consciously or unconsciously—remains bound within the ideology. By his religious affiliation he has publicly announced an ideological position which he has taken. Joining the church is a commitment, and that commitment constitutes a closure or a conclusion taken as final, on the basis of which actions are to be guided. Therefore, such a commitment is a restriction upon free critical intelligence. One joins the church not "to celebrate one's working hypotheses which are constantly being re-examined," but to celebrate one's faith for living, to which one has firmly decided to dedicate his life.

The issue posed, then, by the religious affiliations of persons

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served by a public school dedicated to the extension of free, critical intelligence, is whether such religious affiliations demand some sort of cloture in the schools. If a religious affiliation is a public announcement that inquiry has been closed by commitment, so far as matters upon which the ideology of the church touches, how shall the school treat matters inside the committed realm? In view of the religious heterogeneity of the United States, a decision on the part of the public schools to avoid all matters inside the realm of commitment of all the various religious groups would create an enormous vacuum. Must the public schools keep away from anything upon which any religious group has made a pronouncement? Is it possible that just the converse might be accepted? Instead of excluding all matters upon which any religion has touched, is it possible that members of religious congregations might see the school as a place where faith is tested in the light of criticism? Could proponents of Christianity and Judaism—religions which have always given large place to critical intelligence—accept a school the function of which is to examine all matters of human concern critically? Thus the function of the school and the function of the church would be seen as different; the church celebrates a commitment while the school critically examines all commitments. Could men of good will see that both functions are worthy? If not, perhaps a system of parochial schools is inevitable.

### *Absolute versus relative knowledge*

Those who insist that the method of critical intelligence demands complete adherence see religion as absolutistic. Not only does the religionist bind himself to an ideology, but he gives assent to the possibility that certain specific ethical propositions are binding and immutable. Religion teaches that there are fixed answers to some specific questions, and there is an educational issue here when schools are dedicated to development of a

thoroughgoing critical intelligence. The educational objective is to teach all youngsters to examine critically all proposed answers. However, the answers presented as final in the light of religious dogma are not to be criticized, so the secularist understands. They are, rather, to be supported by a kind of apologetic reasoning which does not foster and encourage doubt. Secularists are not impressed by the variously popular arguments from self-evidence which appear in religious philosophy. They consider that propositions which bear the aspect of self-evidence are not at all self-evident to men who begin with different assumptions. They regard even mathematics and logic as cultural artifacts rather than as representing the structure of the universe or a necessarily preferred structure of thought.

Religious thought appears to be deductive. Of course religious scholars argue and disagree, and sophisticated religionists attempt to support positions taken in the name of religion with empirical evidence. But those who make critical intelligence primary consider that the dictum of St. Thomas Aquinas to the effect that faith may be above reason applies to all Western religions inescapably. Then the moral, ethical, and political positions taken by churches and synagogues are seen to be supported not solely by empirical justification, but by the claim of religion to some source of higher authority, whether referred to as the voice of God, the Torah, the Bible, or the Church.

### *Method of inquiry*

Secularists have great respect for the dialectical ability of some controversialists in the name of religion. However, the fixed assumptions of religionists in controversy make thoroughgoing, shared inquiry among religionists and secularists extremely difficult. There is a persisting circularity in the arguments of religionists, so it seems. The Bible is true because it is God's book. How do you know that it is God's book? Because God has provided

it.—The words of the priest must be respected. Why? Because he is one called of God to the priesthood. How do I know that he is called? Because he is a priest.—God has spoken directly to me and this is what he has said. How do you know that it was God speaking? Because I have faith. But God does not say that to *me*. Then that is because you do not have faith.

### *Aristocratic versus democratic organization*

Judged against the criteria of the method of disciplined intelligence, it appears that religion supports authoritarian, aristocratic, and undemocratic ways. The sermon is preached at the people, frequently from a platform raised high above their heads. Listeners have no opportunity to question the preacher publicly. In many churches, offices are filled by hierarchical rather than democratic political machinery, as in the decisions made by the Roman Catholic College of Cardinals or in the assignment of pastors by the Methodist stationing committee. Seminaries for the preparation of clergymen deliberately and openly indoctrinate; thus for Jews and Protestants, as for Catholics, certain teachings and certain books are, in effect, placed upon an *Index*. Ceremonial robes are frequently worn by clergymen; these are expensive and ornate. Kneeling, face to dirt, is occasionally a part of religious worship in some churches.

But what of the educational significance of all this? The point is that practices like these are hard to reconcile with an educational doctrine that makes critical intelligence, democracy, and the scientific method key concepts. Such an educational procedure essays to perpetuate and extend the methods of critical intelligence, science, and democracy. While the absolutism of religion appears to be a restriction upon freedom of critical investigation, the rituals and organization of churches appear to be patently expressive of modes of social organization that are undemocratic and authoritarian in important elements.

## A FUNCTIONAL SOLUTION— SEPARATION AND COOPERATION

It must then be granted that there exist grave points of issue between the methods and policies of religion and those of critical intelligence. The various efforts to ignore these differences are mischievous obfuscations. Religion means faith while education means disciplined criticism. Faith and criticism are different. Clear and forthright recognition of the differences will do more to promote cooperative endeavor than misguided efforts to show that there is no conflict. The best way to maintain and protect the differing functions of church and school is to keep them separate, attempting neither to make of the school a church nor to make of the church a school.\* Moreover, religious affiliation and religious belief as such may be considered to be private and inviolable.

### *Inviolability of religious privacy*

A philosophy of public education must be appropriate to the publicity for which the institution of the public school stands. The public schools are no longer public when they become confessional schools, but the exercise of critical intelligence is impotent if significant moral commitment is not an outcome.

Great emphasis has been placed upon the public character of public schools. The position has been that the domain of public concern is the domain of public education. This principle demands its correlative in a respect for privacy. Such respect is a condition for the maintenance of public education. That is, a part of the strength of the public schools must reside in the respect they show for privacy. Schools cannot be all of life; it would be best for American public education to accept a limited and partial function. That is, to give up once and for all any effort to be "all of life." Thus freed from presumptuous claims, the

school may devote itself to cultivation of secular, scientific, critical domains, allowing those who feel the need for nurture of their young in realms beyond to do so through voluntary associations. It might not only be recognized but also strongly emphasized by school people that homes, religious institutions, and mass media have broadly formative functions. Divisions of labor and divisions of perspective among various institutions in an open society are protections of such openness. The monolithic society in which one ideology has finally won out is the totalitarian society.

### *Religion, social action, and education*

On the other hand, whenever religious belief moves over into social action, the action and the propositions taken to justify it enter the public domain, and educational criteria rather than religious criteria provide the proper mode of evaluation. Thus, church and synagogue as social institutions are secular institutions. In public terms, the meaning of religion in a democratic open society is how churches and synagogues function in that society. This way, primary freedom of conscience in matters of faith may be protected; at the same time religious institutions and individuals are held fully responsible for their social positions.

Educators must recognize that there will be certain propositions which, in the light of religion, will be held inviolable and sacred. This being the case, educators must accept something less than a complete and thoroughgoing application of the methods of science and critical intelligence to all matters of human concern, on the part of religionists. However, since the Western religions do not teach that science and critical intelligence are worthless, there will be realms in which agreement on intellectual methods can be achieved, making possible cooperative work. Educators, whether they wish to do so or not, may well accept as one of the facts of life the continued existence within secular

society of various forms of indoctrination—on the part of business, organized labor, cultural and ethnic groups, and organized religion. Campaigns by educators to put all special-interest groups out of business are probably fatuously unrealistic. Setting the boundaries between the special (private or *sacred*) domains and the public domain in social and moral affairs is itself a matter of profound disagreement. A fairly wide range of frontier issues between churches and synagogues, and schools must be accepted as constituting centers of dispute. Probably absolute peace is impossible; but the society in which all disagreement has ceased might not be the best of all possible societies either.

Put most bluntly, this could mean that educators must accept a society in which some concerns are firmly and insistently held by powerful groups in the society to be sacred or private and hence outside the realm of the secular school. The secular educator, with his faith that critical intelligence is the key that unlocks doors, can only wish that these closed areas were open. But his very faith in critical intelligence and his belief in the fallibility of all human judgment may well deter him from engaging in violent revolution to open these areas. Educators themselves have not always been immune to the sin of pride.

Christians and Jews, on the other hand, with their faith in human reason as an endowment of all men—as that which distinguishes men from the brutes—may well give serious thought to the social and intellectual risks of segregated schools, whether the segregation is along racial, social, or religious lines. If the Judaic-Christian tradition in religion teaches that it is through the gentle forces of love and reason that men achieve faith, may not the cooperative cultivation of reason among the greatest number of men be a way of propagating the faith? Does not religion teach that it is through the free exercise of reason that men finally climb to the possibility of achieving the beatific vision? If so, growth and development of segregated parochial schools, colleges, seminaries, and universities may not be an unmixed bless-

ing even to the religionist. For every time a committed Christian or Jew is withdrawn from a secular public school, college, or university, to be placed in a segregated parochial institution, a missionary of religion has been lost. Many secularists would cherish for their children the experience of engaging in playground activity, studying, and going to school and college parties or dances with Christians and Jews. Every time a new parochial institution opens in a community, this possibility is decreased. Particularly in the large cities there is some real danger that the public schools and colleges will become charity schools serving the dispossessed members of economic, racial, and ethnic minorities, while those whose status has been secured attend private institutions.

The organization of churches will be much more consistent with democratic ways if lay leadership can be cultivated wherever possible. Military organization such as that of the Salvation Army and monarchic organization such as that of the Roman Catholic Church are public demonstrations of modes of social organization which are patently undemocratic. The wearing of clerical garb outside the church buildings—whether it be the Lutheran reversed collar or the habit of an Anglican deaconess or a Roman Catholic nun—may be questioned. Is there a democratic justification for singling out the human being who is also a cleric, in the marketplace, in the public meeting, or in rush-hour traffic? A major asset, as the wearer of the garb can well confirm, is to secure special privilege in realms where special privilege is not his due. *The cleric in the marketplace is not a cleric; he is a buyer or seller.* The cleric in traffic is not a cleric; he is a driver of an automobile. To insist upon public display of clerical garb is to weaken the principle of religious privacy which may, after all, be one of the strongest protections of religious liberty.

Is it clearly consistent with Christianity that the human being turned cleric is no longer human? Does not the Judaic-Christian religious tradition teach that all men, including clerics, have

much in common? If we share our appetitive natures with animals and even plants, how much do we share with our fellow men? Do not Franciscans eat and drink? Then why may I not call "Atta boy, Petel" when Father Peter Flanagan, O.F.M., smacks a baseball into far rightfield? Are there not values in public sharing in the secular society? Are special schools, colleges, and universities for religionists in American society consistent with those teachings of the Judaic-Christian tradition that emphasize man's common humanity and the inherent reasonableness of faith? Is a specially marked clergy, members of which display clerical garb and take their religious titles with them wherever they go in the secular society, consistent with a doctrine that teaches that even priests are sometimes lonely?

If secularists, with some reluctance but in good will, can find it possible to respect the privacy of religious consecration, and if Christians and Jews, with some hesitation but in good faith, can take every opportunity to share as men in those things we have in common, we may perhaps live with our differences in the spirit of love and brotherhood. Thus education for critical intelligence, while seen as a constant challenge to religious commitment, might be accepted by religionists as the foundation of public morality and order which makes possible and protects sacred realms of individual privacy.\*

### Notes

p. 254 *"If religion means being bound to a faith uncritically, then the method of religion and the method of intelligence are in conflict."*

It is said that a professor of theology, discussing critical interpretations of the scriptures, advised his students, "Tread softly, gentlemen, when you are treading on human hearts." The Church is the one institution which faces up squarely to life's ultimate and most deeply moving personal experiences: death, birth, and sexual union. Matters discussed in this chapter represent hallowed ground to many people, and the



discussion must be weighed in that light. When we thus give to religion the same reverent respect that we give to a mother's love for her child or a man's love for his wife, two radically different educational implications may be derived. One is that something so precious and so sacred must not be ignored in public education. The other is that something so sacred and so important must not be touched upon in public education.

- p. 255 "*. . . revival of interest in liberal religion on the part of some naturalists and pragmatists*"

It is said that secularism itself is a religion. It is said that when the school leaves out religion it inescapably teaches, by so doing, that religion is unimportant. When one runs, does he thereby teach that it is not good to walk? When one sits, does he thereby teach that it is not good to stand? When one swims, does he thereby teach that it is not good to play tennis? To take the position that the public school should devote itself to secular concerns is not to take the position that sacred concerns are unimportant. It is simply to take the position that the function of the public school is different from that of some other social institutions.

- p. 263 "*The best way to maintain and protect the differing functions of church and school is to keep them separate, attempting neither to make of the school a church nor of the church a school.*"

To teach religion in the public school is to enter into state subsidy of religious education. Does the condition of the churches in those nations which for some time have provided a government subsidy for religion suggest that the intervention of the state into religious matters makes for the healthy growth and vigor of religion?

- p. 267 "*. . . education for critical intelligence . . . might be accepted by religionists as the foundation of public morality and order . . .*"

If the school makes critical intelligence supreme, inescapably it does invite the young to bring all things, including their loves and faiths, before the bar of criticism. Is it wrong to be critical about religion?

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# Critical Intelligence and the Role of the Humanities

ALTHOUGH THE emphasis upon criticism and the method of criticism in a secular philosophy of education does not mean that living itself is reduced to a series of critical, scientific operations, it must be granted that problem-solving methodology rather than consummatory experience was the major preoccupation of the experimentalists. Their position was that when issues of policy need formulation, free human intelligence disciplined in the methods of criticism provides authority. Thus, the very fact that the ultimate educational concern was to maximize human enjoyments supported the doctrine that the prime educational value is development of intelligence. The view was that this job must be carefully done, and as completely as limits of time allowed to the public school permit.

This much accepted, however, care may well be taken to accomplish the educational task without imparting the attitude that problem-solving or critical exercise is the only joyful exercise in life. A weakness of experimentalist education, despite disclaimers by some of its exponents, was its emphasis upon critical problem-solving not balanced by a correlative emphasis upon the arts of living. A point at which

educators emphasizing the centrality of critical intelligence must learn from the humanistic tradition *how* to do with the qualitative dimension of human experience. Out of the diversity of human experience—of human enjoyments and sufferings—grow those creative insights from which come fruitful hypotheses for coping with the new and strange. The humanities tell us more than do the sciences about the disciplines of creative enjoyment and suffering.\*

### NEED FOR A HUMANISTIC DIMENSION

The pragmatic educational theorists tended to identify criticism, intelligence, empiricism, scientific method, and the very method of democracy itself. They were convinced that the problems of men were amenable to experimental method. Through education, confidence in the method was to be engendered. American pragmatism was a thoroughly and perhaps fatuously optimistic philosophy. There was no place in it for failure and frustration. Temporary disappointments were possible, but never failure. It was an activist philosophy. There was always something to be done, and the doing was to forward, measurably and perceptibly, the good life. Prolonged pain, deepened suffering, increasing loneliness, irreparable betrayal, thorough disgrace, and death itself were unthinkable for the pragmatists. Reconstruction of situations was always to be achieved. The possibility of living—for long nights extending into days, months, and years—within an impossible situation was inconceivable.

Thus, the new education pinned its faith on science, on the common man and democracy. The assumption was that if man could solve his material problems so as to assure economic abundance, if he could be provided with the tools of criticism through education, and if he could be effectively protected in his rights to participate in democratic decision-making, the

good life would be achieved. The philosophy of the new education, was a dream, a faith, and a glorious optimism. However, today a ground swell of professional and popular opinion is that the faith of the new education was misplaced and naïve; for, so it is said, we have achieved economic abundance and security and we have saved democracy, yet men are not happy as had been promised. There was something vital, affirmative, vigorous in this thoroughgoing affirmation of what William James called the doctrine of meliorism. Nevertheless, men must live with pain, and while the pragmatists had much to say about how to relieve pain, they gave little or no help in teaching how to live with it.

In contrast to empirical or pragmatic philosophies, the non-empirical philosophies and the great world religions have given much attention to the problems of pain, suffering, and death. Are such questions meaningless because of the incapacity of men to devise techniques for their experimental verification? There is death; there is pain without surcease; there is failure from which recovery is not possible; there is betrayal which cannot be reconciled. These remain experiences with which men must abide. Experimentalist philosophies of education have never had much to say about them. To be sure, experimentalism has had much to say about minimizing them, but it has not addressed itself to living with them.

Neither has experimentalism concerned itself with traits such as love, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion. Yet, it must be granted that virtues such as these have contributed to human well-being as men have found it necessary to live with death, pain, failure, and betrayal. The values of love, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion appear not to be established by experimental verification, yet few indeed would wish to live in a world in which these virtues were not exercised. Could it be that there is, after all, an empirical basis for these humane traditions?

## MEANINGS OF HUMANISTIC STUDY

*"Humanistic" a relative term*

A very strong case can be made for the possibility that any study can be a humanistic study. When typing is studied from the standpoint of printing in Western civilization, it has humanistic significance. When basket-making, sewer-cleaning, or plumbing are learned, and learned about in the context of the total culture which makes them of value and interest, they are learnings that contribute to man's understanding, his ability to control and predict, and hence his freedom and self-realization as a human being. Moreover, it must be granted that a course in Greek, taught by an instructor sensitive to the joys and sufferings of contemporary man, may be of greater humanistic value than a course in contemporary economic problems taught by an ignorant hack. Conversely, a good course in contemporary economic problems may be of greater humanistic value than a mediocre one in Greek. Let it be granted that any study can be humanistic; that a study not classified as one of the humanities in college curriculum bulletins may, under certain circumstances, have humanistic value; that a study ordinarily considered to be one of the humanities may be de-humanized in its treatment. It must be agreed that some of the time some of the studies not designated as humanistic are of significant humanistic value, and that some of the time some of the so-called humanistic studies are debased through mistreatment. It is the method of study, not the subject matter, that makes the difference.

If we grant that the degree to which a study is of humanistic value depends to some extent upon how it is studied, may we also grant that some studies are more humanistic at some times and at some places than at others? There are various chains that bind men. Greed, hatred, and opportunism sometimes obstruct freedom. Disease, superstition, inadequate housing, transportation,

and communication, and technological incompetence constitute chains that keep men in bondage. In some of these situations, the study of health and hygiene, house construction, and road-building might have a very high priority in a list of humanistic studies. For disease-ridden, ill-housed, isolated people cannot be free. Before they can be free, a modicum of physical health, shelter from the elements, and communication with other men must be achieved. Thus, it may be argued, a study may be humanistic or non-humanistic depending upon how it is taught, where, and when. In a changing world, the studies designated as the humanities may change, depending on the manner in which things need most to be studied to maintain freedom in specific times and places.

### *Literary humanism distinguished*

Philosophically, then, there is a continuing discussion of which sorts of studies are the humanistic studies. Even the teacher of sewer-cleaning, basket-weaving, or automobile-driving can produce a rationale to show that the subject he teaches is a humanistic study. However, there is another dimension in which the term "the humanities" and the designation "humanistic" has been used; namely, to designate those literary or academic studies which are based upon the written word evaluated according to criteria of style and taste which are avowedly non-experimental. It has become a common practice to designate these non-experimental literary studies in school and college curricula as *The Humanities*, to distinguish them from the *Social Sciences* (sociology, political science, economics, and perhaps history—although some historians would prefer to classify history as one of the humanities), and the *Natural Sciences* (biology, chemistry, physics, frequently mathematics, geology, and astronomy).

Classificatory schemes vary from school to school and from college to college. Sometimes biologists insist that a distinction be

made between the biological and the physical sciences. Sometimes psychology is classified among the social sciences; occasionally, however, it is placed with the sciences such as physics and chemistry. Mathematicians sometimes claim a place for mathematics among the humanities. Nevertheless, in pedagogic usage, while granting the philosophical disputes about which studies are truly humanistic, the term *The Humanities* is taken to refer to philosophy, literature, languages, and religion—to what have sometimes been known as the arts and letters.

If, then, we use the term *the humanities* and the designation *humanistic* in this pedagogic sense, a distinction may be drawn between the substance and the intellectual methods of the humanities and the sciences. In terms of this usage, those who maintain that the literary humanities deserve a more important place in contemporary education can argue that disease, unemployment, and inadequate social adjustment are not the chains that bind men and destroy freedom. They question whether the scientific-technological studies are finally humanistic in any time and place, on the ground that the mind sustained by great and inspiring ideas is independent of its material environment. In any case, however, they maintain that great strides have been made in solving these sorts of problems in the twentieth century Western world. Thus, they view the emphasis upon the scientific method and outlook in progressive schools not as a vitally modern emphasis, but as a parochial and limited one. They suggest that, after all, progressive education was born in the 'twenties and matured in the 'thirties. They suggest that its preoccupation with scientific problem-solving, and vocational and social adjustment, is a lingering reflection of those pre-war years of a somewhat naïve early twentieth century. If the educational concerns of the pragmatists and experimentalists were ever appropriate, the primary concern today is coping with the deep insecurities that plague human beings, with the dullness and materialistic superficiality that characterize the fully employed worker, and with the

estrangement from self which the socially adept group-man experiences.

## REASONS FOR NEGLECT OF THE HUMANITIES

Pragmatism as a theory of inquiry and as a definition of intellectual method is naturalistic but not inherently materialistic. Nevertheless, it must be granted that its formulations and applications in the twentieth century tended to emphasize the material and quantitative dimensions of life.

Educational pragmatism was closely related to the so-called political and economic liberalism of the years between the wars. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has called the pre-World War II liberalism a "quantitative liberalism." He asserts that it dealt with immediate problems of subsistence and survival.<sup>1</sup> It was successful in achieving its goals and thus, argues Schlesinger, it has become irrelevant to the problems of mid-century.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, we now have the economy of abundance to which the liberals of the years between the wars aspired, but the peace and happiness which it was assumed would follow are not experienced by men.<sup>3</sup> Schlesinger proposes that the new liberalism of the 'fifties, while not repudiating the old, must concern itself with a new range of human concerns.<sup>4</sup> The challenge to mid-century liberalism, according to Schlesinger, is "qualitative," in contrast to the "quantitative" challenges of the 'thirties.

Lewis Mumford criticized the pragmatic liberalism of the 'thirties for its preoccupation with the ". . . machinery of life."<sup>5</sup> In his view, pragmatism ignored the fundamentally important problems of life and existence. It was totally superficial and inadequate as a guiding philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Future of Liberalism," *The Reporter*, May 3, 1956, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Lewis Mumford, "The Corruption of Liberalism," *New Republic*, April 29, 1940, p. 509.



. . . it minimized the role of instinct, tradition, history; it was unaware of the dark forces of the unconscious; it was suspicious of either the capricious or the incalculable, for the only universe it could rule was a measured one, and the only type of character it could understand was the utilitarian one. . . .

esthetics, ethics, and religion . . . were left to traditional thinkers . . . On the whole, most liberals today have produced no effective thought in any of these fields; and they live, as it were, on the debris of past dogmas and buried formulations. . . .

In short, it is not unfair to say that the pragmatic liberal has taken the world of personality, the world of values, feelings, emotions, wishes, purposes, for granted. He assumed either that this world did not exist, or that it was relatively unimportant; at all events, if it did exist, it could be safely left to itself, without cultivation.<sup>6</sup>

The men engaged in teacher education in the pragmatic tradition have themselves been men of feeling and passion. How can it be that the pragmatic movement in American education involved undue concentration upon the material? In the first place, the specific challenges to humane educational values during the Depression years were economic. It was considered that such forces had produced Mussolini and Hitler in Europe. Again, the method of science, which the pragmatists took as the model for intellectual work and which they thought was parallel with the method of democracy, had been most successful in the physical and material realms. Thirdly, the naturalism in which pragmatic theory was grounded encouraged a concentration upon earthy values—those of food, clothing, shelter, and security.

### PRAGMATISTS IN EDUCATION AS HUMANISTS

It is clear from the writings of John Dewey and Boyd Bode that they drew upon the resources of classic philosophy, literature, and art. However, the efforts occasionally made to show that these men were themselves literary humanists, fully sympathetic with a central role for the humanities in general education and in

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 569-70.

the preparation of teachers, are bad examples of a precious kind of higher criticism. Dewey published an article entitled "Challenge to Liberal Thought" in *Fortune* magazine in August, 1944. In this article, Dewey uses the terms *science, technology, contemporary social issues and problems* to designate ". . . what is modern in human civilization."<sup>7</sup> He then argues that disunity and lack of coherence in modern education result not from giving these things too much emphasis, but because they have not been given the central place that they deserve. The way of educational progress is not a way that would eliminate or de-emphasize technology. "The problem of going ahead instead of going back is then a problem of liberalizing our technical and vocational education."<sup>8</sup> To explain what he means by this, Dewey proceeds as follows:

The attempt to re-establish linguistic skills and materials as the center of education, and to do it under the guise of "education for freedom" or a "liberal" education, is directly opposed to all that democratic countries cherish as freedom. The idea that an adequate education of any kind can be obtained by means of a miscellaneous assortment of a hundred books, more or less, is laughable when viewed practically. A five-foot bookshelf for adults, to be read, reread, and digested at leisure throughout a lifetime, is one thing. Crowded into four years and dealt out in fixed doses, it is quite another thing. In theory and basic aim, however, it is not funny. For it marks a departure from what is sound in the Greek view of knowledge as a product of intelligence exercised at first hand. It marks reversion to the medieval view of dependence upon the final authority of what others have found out—or supposed they had found out—and without the historical grounds that gave reason to the scholars of the Middle Ages.

The reactionary movement is dangerous (or would be if it made serious headway) because it ignores and in effect denies the principle of experimental inquiry and firsthand observation that is the lifeblood of the entire advance made in the sciences—an advance so marvelous that the progress in knowledge made in uncounted previous millenniums is almost nothing in comparison. It is natural enough that the chief advocates

<sup>7</sup> John Dewey, "Challenge to Liberal Thought," *Fortune*, Vol. XXX, No. 2, August, 1944, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

of the scholastic reaction should be literary men with defective scientific educations, or else theologians who are convinced in advance of the existence of a supernaturally founded and directed Institution, whose official utterances rank as fixed and final truths because they are beyond the scope of human inquiry and criticism.<sup>9</sup>

Of course in this statement Dewey is primarily concerned with one group of traditionalists whose influence was particularly strong in 1944. There is evidence that since that time the base of the new educational conservatism has been broadened so that many who do not share the specific neo-Scholastic orientation that Dewey has in mind are advocating de-emphasis of the scientific and technological in general education and in the preparation of teachers, in favor of renewed emphasis upon the literary and the metaphysical.

However, let us recall the attack of another great pragmatist upon a statement which was much less narrowly a reflection of neo-Scholastic thought than those criticized by Dewey in the *Fortune* article. As Boyd Bode interpreted the so-called Harvard Report *General Education in a Free Society* when it was published as World War II drew to a close, the statement identified three chief constituents of our cultural heritage: 1) the ideal of the free man, which we inherited from the Greeks; 2) the ideal of walking with God, contributed by Christianity; and 3) the scientific method. Bode saw the Harvard Report as recommending the preservation of all three of these strands.<sup>10</sup> To him, the proposal that the classical tradition, Christianity, and science walk together in a curriculum in general education that gives each its due seemed to be superficial.<sup>11</sup>

We are living in an age of transition, in which two irreconcilable philosophies of life, two divergent and discordant systems of morality, two competing conceptions of truth and knowledge, are in conflict. If the

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>10</sup> Boyd Bode, "The Harvard Report," *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. XVII, January, 1946, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>10</sup> Boyd Bode, "The Harvard Report," *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol XVII, January, 1946, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Report had presented either of these points of view in clear-cut fashion, it would have been a contribution to clear thinking and to the task of reorientation. . . . But instead of clarifying, it perpetuates the confusion by creating the impression that there is no real problem. Every teacher in the land can find warrant in the Report for what he has been doing all along. He can deal with problems empirically, or he can defend his preconceptions, his prejudices, his intolerances, by having recourse to those absolute visions or simple and total insights which can never be haled into court and judged at the bar of experience.<sup>12</sup>

Bode insisted that there are conflicts among abstract reason, faith, and science, and that a fundamental need in American education is greater clarity with respect to these conflicting ways of guiding thought.<sup>13</sup> He abhorred the manner in which, as he saw it, the Harvard Report proposed to secure professional peace by giving a place to all three. His own position is stated as he refers to scientific method as the sort of authority which makes cooperation possible:

In science we get as close as it is possible to get to the ideal of co-operation without agreement on ultimates. The only thing that counts in science is the evidence, as tested by scientific method. . . . Science is by all odds the most successful form of unbiased co-operation among ourselves and among nations, which we have so far achieved.<sup>14</sup>

Bode, like Dewey, saw the educational challenge not in some sort of revival of traditional humanistic learning, but in a fuller and more aggressive application of the methods of science and technology to all human concerns.

John L. Childs, another pragmatist in educational theory, asserts that educational values can come from use of the classics in school work, but he insists that this will only be the case when such use comes in connection with a total educational procedure involving students in ". . . firsthand and creative responses to

<sup>12</sup> Boyd Bode, "The Harvard Report Once More," *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. XV, April, 1946, p. 204.

<sup>13</sup> Bode, "The Harvard Report," *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

the actual conditions and problems of their time."<sup>15</sup> He shows considerable sympathy toward the study of economic vocations as an organizing center for the school curriculum, and stresses that practical, vocational, and utilitarian activities are to have central place in the school.<sup>16</sup>

Nor are there any forms of subject matter that are so common and unclean that they do not provide opportunity for intellectual treatment and study—soil fertilizers, sour milk, microbes, pigs and cows, sweaty undershirts, diseases of the body, processes of ingestion, digestion, and excretion are all possessed of intellectual potentialities when viewed through the eyes of the scientific inquirer who is interested in discovering what is going on, how it is going on, and by what means that which goes on can be more adequately controlled for purposes of human use and enjoyment.<sup>17</sup>

Active cooperation in productive work is essential to the good life, in this view.

For the pragmatists, the good life is a life of socially useful activity, and the good society is one in which all cooperate in productive work designed to contribute to the common good. There are many forms of productive work, but the role of the gentleman of leisure is not one of them.<sup>18</sup>

According to Childs, the primary intellectual challenge at the mid-point of the twentieth century is that of forwarding the ". . . intellectual and moral implications of science and democracy."<sup>19</sup> It is to promote ". . . the reconstructions in life outlook and group practices which are inherent in these emerging patterns of experimental thought and democratic living."<sup>20</sup>

It must be concluded that Dewey, Bode, and more recent exponents of a pragmatic position, such as John L. Childs, have not seen a revival of attention to and emphasis upon the traditional

<sup>15</sup> John L. Childs, *Education and Morals* (New York: Appleton Century-Crofts, 1930), p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> John L. Childs, *American Pragmatism and Education* (New York: Holt, 1936), p. 360.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 359-60.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

humanistic studies as a major educational challenge. As they viewed culture and education in their day, the problem was not that science and technology had somehow crowded out the humanities, but rather, that the experimental, critical, scientific method had not been pushed far enough.

## CONDITIONS TO BE MET

The growing contemporary concern about the values of the humanistic tradition among public school people is all to the good insofar as it remains a concern about the significance of the humanities for the masses of men. For the humanities at best involve a sympathetic and appreciative exploration of the ways in which people have, from time to time, met the inescapable problems of living with themselves.\* Of course, humanistic study may become affectation. The professional literary humanist may become a dilettante of the inner life. Devoting himself to letters rather than living, he may fail to catch the living message. Thus, it is entirely possible that the spirit of the empiricist as represented in educational experimentalism can contribute to the revitalization of the humanities. The experimentalist is disciplined in criticism defined as overt test in the social arena, and for him, letters divorced from operational significance are meaningless.

### *Secular context necessary*

Conceivably, a pluralistic society might support a variety of schools, each school or system of schools representing a special perspective on the universe, man, and nature. It is also possible that the very existence of common concerns in the world of business, industry, and politics might sustain a sufficient realm of commonality so that political community might be maintained. In other words, it is not argued here that an open, democratic society presupposes a public school system. On the other hand, it appears that a public school system can be a mighty support for



democratic ways and the preservation of freedom in a pluralistic, open society. Moreover, in the United States there are strong traditions supporting the public school system; Americans believe in public schools.

In a pluralistic society, a public school must be a secular school. Otherwise, in a land in which there are many differing ethnic, religious, philosophical, and aesthetic perspectives, the school will do violence to things held privately sacred. Moreover, the intellectual method that is most clearly public is the method of experimental inquiry. We hold, then, that the method appropriate to the secular public school in an open society is the method of critical intelligence. This being the position taken, literary humanistic study introduced into the public school must be characterized by the same sort of disciplined intellectual criticism as that prevailing in the scientific fields.

#### *Aristocratic emphasis to be avoided*

There is considerable evidence that the literary humanistic studies have characteristically received emphasis in schools for the classes rather than in the public schools or the schools for the masses of men. Subjects like Latin, Greek, history of philosophy, comparative religion, art history, aesthetics, theory of music, history of religion, and literature have not been demonstrably utilitarian in their implications. Therefore, many of the young people who have studied such subjects have been from homes of wealth and position; thus they have not needed to learn in school how to earn a living. What they learned in school could be decorative or luxurious, inasmuch as they were assured of food, clothing, shelter, appropriate assistance in beginning family life, and some recreation. This has been one reason why there has been a tendency to de-emphasize humanistic studies in public schools. If literary humanistic study is to be encouraged in public schools, it must be relevant to the concerns of men who do the world's productive work.

*Traditional authority to be discounted*

A more fundamental reason why the literary humanities have not been given greater emphasis in public schools is that various non-experimental, authoritarian methods have developed in literary scholarship. Even today, it appears that the influence of the "purists" is greater than that of the "functionalists" in the study of language. That is, the criteria in the study of a language are those of alleged "good taste" or "best usage," so that the mastery of the language is a process in which the student is directly and unequivocally indoctrinated in what has been defined as correct usage. In such language courses no opportunity is given to study or appreciate the deviations from stipulated form which are constantly going on within a living language as the language is used by people of various social classes.

In traditional philosophy, criteria in the light of which students are taught to think are those of logical consistency and implication. But traditional philosophy offers no opportunity for the empirical checking of philosophical propositions. When students begin to engage in such criticism, they are called back by their professor on the ground that they are indulging in "psychologizing" or in "sociologizing," and that philosophical propositions cannot be criticized that way.

Similarly, in art history and theory of music, intellectual criteria are likely to be formally absolute. So far as methodology is concerned, there is evidence that the systematic study of religion as conducted by liberal Jewish and Protestant scholars is more empirical than in other literary humanistic fields. The impact of the higher criticism has made it customary rather than exceptional for the scholar in the field of religion to examine theological propositions in the light of archeology, sociology, contemporary history, and philology. Nevertheless, wherever orthodoxy prevails in religion, there is again the *a priori* commitment to some standard by which judgments are to be made, yet not itself subject to modification.

Now if the literary humanities are inherently aristocratic and authoritarian, they probably belong in the domain of the private or sacred. On the other hand, it is possible that there exist certain empirical resources in the humanities. It is possible that the public schools, dedicated as they have quite properly come to be to the method of critical intelligence, have thrown out the baby with the bath as they have de-emphasized the traditional literary humanistic studies.

### A ROLE FOR THE HUMANITIES IN SECULAR EDUCATION

Individuals in the democratic open society must live with themselves as well as with others. Even when the method of critical intelligence is given full allegiance, every individual from time to time finds himself stuck in predicaments. That is, he is involved in predicaments in which the only way open for reconstruction of affairs is that which leads away from the things and persons "out there" and back into those aspects of the situation that are constituted of his feelings, wishes, hopes, and disappointments, unspoken and unmoved. A part of every situation is the man himself *feeling* the situation. The only way to reconstruct some situations is to reconstruct this part of them.

Here is a point at which a concern about the humanities is appropriate on the part of those who represent the method of critical intelligence in the schools and in the preparation of teachers. The proposal is that we have in art, music, and literature insights that may be successfully applied to those aspects of the reconstruction of experience which depend largely upon or relate most directly to the individual's feelings of joy, grief, despair, elation, hope, or fear. Such insights become truth-claims only as they are acted upon and validated in the light of critical intelligence as defined by the pragmatic test. They are not sources

of validated knowledge, but they are valuable sources of creative inspiration.\*

Of course, there are overtones of defeatism in the above analysis. It may recall the "vale of tears" conception of life which was emphasized in some forms of evangelical Christianity. This is granted; but this is also why there may have been a superficial optimism in the pragmatic educational theory of the 'twenties and 'thirties. The position taken here is that life—even in the reconstructed society—is to some extent a vale of tears. There is also the possibility that dynamic, vigorous reconstruction of situations, in the sense in which Dewey and Bode thought of such reconstruction, demands a kind of inner strength on the part of the active human agent which education cannot leave to chance or to psychoanalysis. That is, it may be that the same strength and courage that enable an individual to live with unbearable pain, ignominious defeat, and unspeakable horror are demanded in moments of attack. It may be that only those who dare risk defeat have the guts to attack.

A vigorous interest in and concern about the human agent in teaching situations is now demanded. The pragmatic thinkers about education, in their emphasis upon social reconstruction, in their tendency to rely upon the physical sciences for models of method, and in their sometimes adolescent optimism with regard to the possibility of objective reconstruction of all situations, lost the human agent. In full recognition that every situation bears within it the griefs, joys, sorrows, and pains of human agents, it is time that pragmatists devote attention to these real features of experience. Teachers and educational leaders in the secular public schools must begin to grant that the problems of the inner man are real constituents of situations and, while holding firmly to their insistence upon the democratic, critical, scientific methodology, must proceed to give greater place to such problems. As this is done, they will no longer pit science against the humanities but, rather, will insist upon the critical treatment

of the humanities as deserving a major place in the preparation of teachers and in public education.\* They will do this on the ground that there are empirical resources in the humanities—in literature, art, music, and philosophical and religious myth—for dealing with the problems of the inner man. The relationship of the humanities to the natural sciences and the social sciences in a school committed to the method of critical intelligence is clearly suggested in the following statement of the function of the humanities in general education, by a group of academic scholars:

To explore in particular the responses of gifted individuals through the arts, literature, religion, and philosophy to varieties of human experience—as complementary to studies of man's physical and biological environment (the natural sciences) and the behavior of men *en masse* (the social sciences).<sup>21</sup>

The statement quoted is one of five related aspects of the humanities distinguished by the members of a discussion group at a conference. It is not seen as the only aim of the humanities by those who drafted the report. We select it here, however, as an indication of the role to be played by the humanities in secular public schools devoted to the extension of the method of critical intelligence. To the extent that the humanities become the study of particular types of human response to situations, subject to the same rigorous empirical and experimental criticism as is applied to materials of the social and natural sciences, the study of the humanities can be pursued by the method of critical intelligence

<sup>21</sup> Robert F. Davidson, "The Humanities in General Education," Chapter 8 in *Current Trends in Higher Education* (Washington: Association for Higher Education, National Education Association, 1949), p. 56. Based on the findings of Groups 8 and 9 of the Fourth National Conference on Higher Education, Chicago, April 4-7, 1949. Chairman of the Groups was F. R. B. Godolphin, Dean of the College, Princeton University. Consultants were Reginald F. Arragon, Professor of History, Reed College, Lennox Grey, Professor of English, Teachers College, Columbia University, and J. Hooper Wise, Professor of English, University of Florida. Mr. Davidson, in 1949, was Chairman of the Humanities in the University College, University of Florida.

and experiment. To the extent that the dimension represented by the humanities, thus defined, is left out, meanings and data of vital significance for the establishment of critically grounded judgments about human affairs are omitted. American public education under the influence of pragmatic theory has tended to make this omission. The recommendation is that the public secular schools correct this error.

### CONTINUING STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN EDUCATION

A move to give more attention to the humanities in the public secular schools will not mean an end to the struggle for power in American education. Some will continue to insist that religion, classic philosophy, and literature yield truths that are not subject to empirical verification. However, as secular educators begin to grant the reality and significance of the problems of the inner man and the possible relevance of the humanities to such problems, the struggle for power may gradually change from a struggle for subject-matter priorities—for time in the school curriculum—to a struggle to extend competing methodologies. That is, we may come to think not so much of scientific, technological, and professional courses opposed to humanistic, liberal, and literary subject matters, as of critical and empirical opposed to dogmatic and authoritarian methodologies.

Educators must not lose sight of the fact that to consider the role of the humanities in public education is to consider a struggle for power, influence, and prestige. This struggle is so intense that basic issues are too frequently obscured in clouds of demagogic exaggeration. Power groups in the academic community and in the larger society frequently build ideological support for their position by appeal to non-empirical methodologies. Political strategies are at work within the profession and within the larger society to implement institutionalized values at stake.

### Summary

The theme of this chapter has been that the educational theorizing of the 'twenties and 'thirties was overoptimistic with regard to the method of the physical sciences as the model for all empirical investigation, and overly preoccupied with social and economic concerns. No fundamental issue has been raised as to the basic validity and relevance of the method of critical intelligence for public secular education in a democratic open society. The concern, then, has not been with presenting a critique of pragmatism as a fundamental educational theory but, rather, with the subject matters and intellectual models to which pragmatists in education gave attention in the historical milieu of past decades. Moreover, we have not made the judgment that the emphases of the pragmatic theorists in education during the 'twenties and 'thirties were entirely inappropriate to those times; however, we do maintain that those emphases are inadequate at mid-century. Specifically, an attempt has been made to develop the argument that, granting the values and the methodology of the dedication to critical intelligence, there is reason to re-examine and re-emphasize certain empirical resources for public education in the humanities. The analysis has constituted an effort to locate points at which there may be a valid concern about educational resources in the humanities on the part of public school educators. The argument may be summarized as follows:

1) To the extent that pressure for increased attention to the humanities comes from those who have a vested interest in the perpetuation of non-scientific and pre-scientific subject-matters and methods, public school educators can have no part of it.

2) In a power struggle which intensifies in teacher education institutions and in the schools, public school educators must stand with those who defend the critical approach to all matters of human concern.

3) Reconstruction of situations by reconstruction of objective elements in them is not always possible; some situations are "frozen" over long periods of time.

4) In "frozen" situations, reconstruction must come primarily in the feelings, attitudes, and outlooks of human agents.

5) Pragmatists in educational theory gave little or no attention to

techniques for such reconstruction of experience by reconstruction of the self.

6) Empirical resources for such reconstruction are to be found in imaginative literature, art, music, classic philosophy, and religion; these human expressions are considered as raising significant questions and suggesting hypotheses worthy of test, to be subjected to public criticism.

If a devotion to critical intelligence is to remain the central emphasis of public schools in the United States, educators must recognize the need for greater attention to qualitative dimensions of living. They must recognize the desperate need of men and women to come to terms with personal tragedy and pain, comedy and joy. No matter how many of the obvious social, economic, and political problems are solved, each man and woman will need to cope with the intimate, personal qualities of manhood or womanhood in his world. The subject matters with which the literary humanities deal must be given greater emphasis in the schools, for since the subject matters are inescapably important, they should be carefully dealt with in disciplined intellectual contexts.

## Notes

- p. 271 *"The humanities tell us more than do the sciences about the disciplines of creative enjoyment and suffering."*

Cultivation of the imagination suffers in a school that has adopted a predominantly scientific technological outlook. Realms of fantasy and of human joy and passion are not systematically explored in such a school. Dramatic effect is lost as history yields to social studies and as classical literature yields to English for modern living.

- p. 282 *"... the humanities ... constitute ... exploration of the ways in which people have ... met the inescapable problems of living with themselves."*

An increased emphasis upon literature and the humanities is evident in schools of engineering and technology and in various training programs for business executives. The rationale behind such efforts, as stated by businessmen, is the desperate need for insight and skill in human relations. Is



it possible that study of the humanities helps a man understand his fellow man, and thus work with him more effectively?

- p. 286 *"They [the humanities] are not sources of validated knowledge, but they are valuable sources of creative inspiration."*

The concessions to the humanities made in this chapter will fail to satisfy many humanistic scholars. For it is commonly asserted that the humanities represent a different way of knowing—that the wisdom that comes out of humanistic study comes not by the methods of critical intelligence but by a kind of imaginative insight. The position taken in this chapter is that the method of critical intelligence remains supreme, but that the humanities furnish indispensably important data and meanings for intellectual work. The argument here is that we may learn from the humanities only by exercising critical intelligence in treating them.

- p. 287 *"... critical treatment of the humanities . . . deserving a major place in the preparation of teachers and in public education."*

At one of the larger American municipal colleges, Brooklyn College of the City of New York, there has been developed a uniquely realistic conception of humanistic study. Dr. Harry Gideonse, president of Brooklyn College, worked closely with Hutchins during the early years of the reorganization at the University of Chicago, and broke with Hutchins as the latter advocated establishing order in the university by selection of a set of metaphysical principles to be taken as authoritative. Brooklyn has opened its doors to persons of intellectual ability, from whatever background of race, religion, or occupational class, regardless of sex, age, or even academic background. Facing up squarely to the overwhelming pressure for vocational training in the competitive economic milieu of New York City, Brooklyn has remained a liberal arts college providing, through a wide range of "vocational inlays," liberal arts curricula organized around centers of vocational interest and concern. Rejecting the conception of liberal education as merely decorative, contempo-

rary and utilitarian meanings and applications of knowledge are consistently placed alongside the aesthetic and spiritual. Through the years at this institution, an effective organization for counselling students has been built, staffed largely by teaching members of the faculty. This is an example of a liberal arts college program for intellectually able men and women who must work to make their livings. It recognizes the dignity and necessity of work, the inescapable vocational specialization required in contemporary urban society, and the responsibility of the college for guidance of the student in full consideration of the economic facts of life, but with a firm and unswerving commitment to the belief that tradition plays some role in the education of free men in a democratic society. See Harry D. Gideonse, *The Higher Learning in a Democracy* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1937); also, Gideonse, "The Coming Showdown in the Schools," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, February 5, 1915, pp. 2-6; and Gideonse, "Walter Lippmann and Educational Reconstruction," *School and Society*, September 5, 1942, pp. 169-73.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# Education for the Good Life in the Humane Community

THE UNEQUIVOCAL commitment of the public schools to the method of critical intelligence with its emphasis upon experimentation means that the schools will function as dynamic centers of community life. That is, if the very intellectual method that the schools strive to impart is one which holds that ideas must be tried out in action, people coming out of these schools will be busy trying things out—in homes, clubs, and businesses. In other words, the society that teaches the experimental method in its public schools is likely to become an experimental society. Ideas are not merely appreciated passively; they are acted upon, evaluated, and refined in the light of their consequences. This experimental conception of inquiry sees learning as an active process that involves mastery of physical and conceptual media. In this view, education is seen as a continuing process of learning to use things and ideas not as ends but as means, and hence as tools. Mastery of tools involves practice with them, always in the light of personal limitations and potentialities, and cultural realities. Thus, learning is a process of creating—of doing things with the media or tools available. This learning, however, has a social basis.

## SOCIAL BASIS OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Now the intelligent practice of which we speak must also be guided by a knowledge of how others have used the tools with which we work. Thus, understanding of the possibilities and limitations of intellectual instruments is achieved. To carry forward the active process that is learning, a knowledge of history and of related disciplines is essential to the control of the tools in specific circumstances. However, the constant focus in education is upon the creative uses of knowledge and skill. Teachers must be "subject matter specialists" to the degree that familiarity with basic intellectual tools is insured; but inasmuch as the teacher will view learning as a creative process, subject matter is always used under the limitations and in the light of the creative potentialities of specific human beings in specific cultures. On the one hand, the pedagogic methods used by teachers will express this conception of learning as doing; on the other hand, explicit study of societies and persons at work with intellectual tools will guide the practice. That is, there will be learning experiences based not only upon creative experience with materials, but also upon discussion and observation of the constructive role of intellectual activity in affairs of men. The community itself then becomes a kind of open studio in which thinking is practiced. It also furnishes the media and the subject matter of thought.\*

In the upper reaches of the school and college curriculum, increasing specialization is presumed. However, specialized work in mathematics, in economics, or in political philosophy must continue to center around the practice of thought as an active, creative discipline—now specialized—with the subject matter and the limitations drawn from the human-social situation in which the thinking takes place.

Inasmuch as critically intelligent living—creative living—involves one in a wide range of situations, particularly in an ad-

vanced, complicated culture like our own, schools must finally develop competence in a wide variety of techniques. This is to provide the young with an adequate complement of craftsmanship. However, inasmuch as intellectual craftsmanship is inextricably bound up with knowledge of cultural and human limitations and possibilities, there is a constant grounding in history and theory. There must be wide knowledge and understanding of the culture and of the relationship of intellectual methods to that culture, past and present. The physical and social sciences, philosophy, aesthetics, history, psychology, language, and literature, music, the drama, and religion are relevant. Why? Because they provide insight into the possibilities and limitations of men in societies in various times and places working with the intellectual tools that are the media of creative thought.

Nor should the school be seen as the only place in which creative learning takes place. Consideration must be given to the resources of the entire community, and limitations and possibilities in learning experiences provided by other institutions must be accepted and understood. The educational resources and services readily available in contemporary urban centers constitute an invaluable asset. People are at work creating in the shops, on the streets, and in the theaters and museums of a great city. Psychology, political science, philosophy, religion, art, literature, and music are being made all around us in the big city. The social agencies and schools there ought to be centers in which the creative possibilities of the arts and sciences are constantly applied in the organization of personal and social life in the neighborhoods they serve.

### NEED FOR SOCIAL DIMENSION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

One aspect of the influence of the science-of-education movement upon contemporary educational practice is the tendency

of educationists to seek universal principles of behavior. There has been much talk of individual differences, but the quest has been for types of "universal man." It is assumed that a course of human growth and development can be plotted, from which individual deviations are measured. Societies are seen as influencing the course of development, but not constituting it. School-system-wide policies of admission and promotion are set up, based upon chronological age. School studies are divided according to appropriate age-grade units, ignoring cultural differences from neighborhood to neighborhood. A vast battery of standardized tests is administered, most of which finally assume age-grade norms, again disregarding cultural differences. Such policies ignore the conception of learning as an active process of wrestling with intellectual tools within the limits and possibilities of specific persons and groups in specific places. Such policies involve the failure to recognize that the media of creative learning, if learning is critical intelligence at real work, must be found in the social situation in which the individual is immersed.

### *Importance of cultural differences*

Despite the fact that regulations affecting the certification of teachers are issued by individual states, not for the nation as a whole, preparation of teachers in the United States exhibits little variation from area to area. That the preparation of a teacher should involve intensive study of the specific community in which he expects to teach has apparently not occurred to specialists in teacher education. Students of the American scene have suggested that much of what is provided in the current literature on human growth and development, educational theory, and pedagogy is based upon data and value assumptions derived from middle-class, Anglo-white-Protestant ways and outlooks. If there is anything to this, we may well ask whether young people prepared in such teacher education programs are qualified to

begin work in ghetto schools, in Negro slum schools, or in the non-Anglo, non-Northern European areas of which our contemporary great industrial cities in the United States are so largely composed.

If the personality is actually constituted of the values, traditions, limitations, and controls inherent in the society that has nurtured it, the best way to understand the person is to study his society. The culture furnishes the raw material of which the person is made, and provides the substantial media of deliberate education; a teacher, then, needs to know the culture in order to understand his students. What they are, their culture has made them. Moreover, the educative reconstruction of experience for which he is responsible professionally is a cultural phenomenon.

The task of gearing teacher education to the unique needs and problems of differing cultures is almost an uncharted realm in educational research and practice in the United States. Community study—serious, systematic research, and not merely field trips and chats with social workers—is sadly neglected in both in-service and preservice teacher education programs. If there is a degree of sterility in contemporary teacher education in the United States, perhaps one reason is that we never get around to giving attention to *our town*, and the sort of people who live in *our town*.

### *Need to review educational priorities*

Of course officials responsible for teacher-preparation programs never say outright that community study is unimportant, nor do school administrators make any such assertion. Rather, it is that other considerations are given higher priority within limited time schedules and budgets. Hence, if study of cultures deserves a place—a central rather than a peripheral place—in teacher education, our value judgments about other studies and administrative practices that now hold a central place may well be reviewed and criticized. Perhaps developmental psychology is not neces-

sarily and inescapably the central scholarly resource for a program of public education. Perhaps the study and practice of the methods of critical intelligence as applied to the media of the lives lived in specific societies in specific times and places ought to be central.

Order in school administration does not demand absolutely that there be city-wide policies of admission and promotion based on chronological age. Instructional groups based on interests and cultural backgrounds would be as practicable as the types of groupings we use now. A course of study may be constructed upon various cultural bases. The schools could, conceivably, make high-jumping, stealing, or fistfighting a central responsibility, rather than development of critical intelligence in an actual social milieu. Criteria of maturity are established by the society. Boyhood, youth, manhood, and senility are social distinctions grounded in culturally established criteria. They are not somehow given in the nature of man as man. Thus, as we have suggested from time to time in preceding chapters, differences in philosophy of education are to be seen as differences in the culture. Working out the differences must occur in the society in which the differences exist. If the conception of critical intelligence as creative reconstruction of experience be taken seriously, then the differences suggest resources upon which intelligence may be put to work. But the advocacies and the proposals must be tested creatively in the society, not merely argued about in the abstract.

### A CULTURAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Having ventured these criticisms, we are obligated to propose for examination and critical test certain positive directions for educational theory and practice.

*Uniqueness of learning situations*

Children learn new things by reconstruction of the experience



they have. No two children have exactly the same complement of past learning to use in confronting the new—in creating a new meaning. This is not only because they have learned different things in school. School contributes but a part, perhaps a small part, of the total learnings that form a human being. Nor is it only because they are unique biological organisms. It is also because each child has grown up in a different house, in a different neighborhood, in a different socio-economic situation, and in a different set of ethnic, moral, and religious traditions. These are not totally different, to be sure, for there are some constants in human experience. Nevertheless, the life story of each individual is sufficiently unique so that each person has his special complex of valuing, preferences, and avoidances. He does his thinking with this uniqueness and with the uniqueness which is his social group and his physical environment.

If it be granted that there are differences in physical features, socio-economic status, and ethnic traditions from neighborhood to neighborhood, a teacher working with children in one school in one city over a given period of time should be critically aware of how things children are learning in that neighborhood are special, different, or unique. Both the substance of what is taught and the method of teaching need to be adjusted in the light of what is learned inside and outside school, how it is learned, and when. Why? Because these learnings are the media upon which intelligence may be exercised, and their reconstruction is the work of art which is intellectual development.

### *Subject matter culturally determined*

Unless we know something about the cultural environment and the learnings it has provided, we may make grave mistakes in deciding what needs to be taught in school. We may be teaching things students already know, or we may be trying to teach things that do not connect in any way with the lives they are living "outside." Then students may become restless, bored, discour-

aged, resentful. Sometimes, the pent-up feelings of resentment explode in incidents which teachers and policemen call delinquent. Other times there may be a withdrawing and a kind of passive resistance which teachers and school psychologists finally label as pathological. It may well be that such so-called "delinquent" or "pathological" behavior has an intellectual basis. If the development of critical intelligence is the dynamic movement of creative problem-solving, necessarily exercised upon media furnished by and constituted of the culture in which life is lived, school practices remote from the culture are meaningless travesties. If what goes on in school is indeed essentially meaningless because it fails to connect with the culture in which life is lived, only neurotics and day-dreamers can participate. When school is "crazy," withdrawal and even what is defined as delinquency may make more sense.\*

### *The cultural basis of behavior*

To emphasize the cultural basis of human nature is not to deny the fundamentally biological roots of human motivation. Men, of course, are animals, and it must never be forgotten that except as the biological demands are met, the process of enculturation is impossible. Optimal conditions for education are set when the organism is possessed of physical health and vigor. Nevertheless, the course of human growth and development is charted not by biological and physiological guidelines. The lines by which development is judged are drawn according to the criteria selected as appropriate, by societies. Judgments of normality and abnormality are value judgments. These vary from culture to culture, and from sub-group to sub-group.

A fundamental weakness of contemporary public school education inheres in the popularity of theories that treat the educative enterprise as one in which the individual is emancipated from his social heritage. Sometimes this comes in an overweening emphasis upon meeting the needs of children and youth, as if

these needs were given in nature. In an entirely different guise, it comes as an effort to emancipate the young from provincialism, to give them what is called "breadth of vision," or to "raise their standards." Either way, what too frequently results is a situation in which teachers attempt to impart the standards of a mythical society to students whom they recognize as physical objects but not as persons. Understanding in depth of the cultural conditions in which students actually live their lives is a sort of understanding that can make a difference in teaching.<sup>1</sup>

### *The cultural orientation of teachers*

A teacher-education sequence not including courses in educational psychology and/or human growth and development is unheard of. But many colleges preparing teachers require little or no systematic course work in the social, historical, and philosophical foundations of education. Apparently, this reflects the assumption that one can understand children and youth and teach anywhere if certain general laws or principles of human behavior are studied, that are considered to hold for all human beings of a given age or developmental range.

If it is reasonable to attempt to build school programs on the social needs and characteristics of neighborhoods which schools serve, scholarly resources in the social sciences may be looked to as an effort is made to locate educational assets, liabilities, and special features of areas in which the work proceeds. Social workers, demographers, students of community organization, and city planners have much to contribute. The people who live in the area are to be understood as their traditions and goals are appreciated. The work of the schools in the area is properly directed to reconstruction of the life that is lived there. This means that the disciplines of criticism are directed to the subject matter furnished by the local situation. Education must start with life the

<sup>1</sup> See W. Allison Davis, "American Status Systems and the Socialization of the Child," Chapter 33 in *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture*, ed. Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray (New York: Knopf, 1948).

way it is lived, not the way scholars say that it ought to be lived. Enrichment of life is the object of the educational enterprise. This takes place as criticism begins in a specific community situation, in the light of its historic development. It takes place as teaching facilitates the growth and extension of creative critical intelligence, seen as reconstruction of actual experience. Such teaching is the sharing of life. It is the impact of experience upon experience which expands horizons and undermines provincialism.

Any school that is good has to be a school where children learn. Learning is creative reconstruction of experience by the methods of critical intelligence; the experience provided by the cultural milieu in which students are living is the raw material, the medium, upon which creative intelligence is exercised. To the degree that words are used in school which cannot be acted out, overtly or in imagination, outside of school, they remain mere words. Hence, the awful accumulation of meaningless verbiage which has so frequently cursed formal education. In order for a teacher to work effectively with the young, he must work with them as they are, putting himself in their places, so far as possible. Systematic study of culture must play a central part in producing teachers who can take the roles of the children and young people with whom they come in contact. Only through such study is communication made possible; words have real meaning only as there are shared understandings of how they are acted out. Through knowledge of cultural situations, illuminated by an imaginative, vicarious entering into the lives of children and young people, teachers may discover new sources of vitality and creative insight.

### VALUES IN A CULTURAL APPROACH

#### *Human needs the criteria*

Eternally fixed judgments of what is admirable, honorable, and approvable are not sought when education is viewed as an expres-

sion of a culture. Rather, the lives men choose to lead are taken as furnishing appropriate starting points. Elemental human aspirations are accepted as worthy ends. A leader in American education who has been particularly sensitive to the importance of a cultural approach to education has stated these as follows:

Most men do not want to be hungry; they cherish the value of *sufficient nourishment*.

Most men do not want to be cold or ragged; they cherish the value of *adequate dress*.

Most men do not want uncontrolled exposure either to the elements or to people; they cherish the value of *shelter and privacy*.

Most men do not want celibacy; they cherish the value of *sexual expression*.

Most men do not want illness; they cherish the value of *physiological and mental health*.

Most men do not want chronic insecurity; they cherish the value of *steady work, steady income*.

Most men do not want loneliness; they cherish the value of *companionship, mutual devotion, belongingness*.

Most men do not want indifference; they cherish the value of *recognition, appreciation, status*.

Most men do not want constant drudgery, monotony, or routine; they cherish the value of *novelty, curiosity, variation, recreation, adventure, growth, creativity*.

Most men do not want ignorance; they cherish the value of *literacy, skill, information*.

Most men do not want continual domination; they cherish the value of *participation, sharing*.

Most men do not want bewilderment; they cherish the value of *fairly immediate meaning, significance, order, direction*.<sup>2</sup>

### *Disciplined intelligence an instrumental value*

We have said that the educational enterprise must be rooted in the local community, for it is in specific homes, specific ethnic and religious traditions, and specific economic and political regimes that personalities take form and maintain integrity. The educational objective is the enrichment of life through critical

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Brameld, "An Inductive Approach to Intercultural Values," *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, September, 1947, pp. 10-11.

examination and reconstruction of ways of life. The values that guide such critical reconstruction are those held by the people; educational leadership does not possess a right to impose values upon the people. However, it is not for mere perpetuation and implementation of existing values that the school exists. There are also the values of disciplined human intelligence, seen as an art, by the mastery of which men may refine and purify the lives they live. A special function of teachers is to serve in the society as exponents of the art of disciplined intelligence. They are constant advocates of its application to the affairs of men. In command of special pedagogic techniques, they work to develop in the young the qualities of disciplined intelligence. We have said that the sources of educational values are two-fold:

1. Elemental human aspirations—the simple earthy values held by masses of men as they live their lives in specific communities,
2. The method of disciplined critical intelligence, seen as a means by which men may realize, refine, and reconstruct their values.

Both of these sources of educational values become moral ends and inspire devotion. The first is the cause of liberty. This cause is centrally involved in campaigns for political independence, civil rights, freedom of speech, fair employment practices, or desegregation in housing and education. The second is the cause of freedom of inquiry. This cause is centrally involved in campaigns for academic freedom, independence of educational and research institutions from censorship or regulation, or freedom of the press and other mass media of communication.

#### *Criteria provided for educational policy-making*

Every school in history has somehow been dedicated to the good life for people. The American public school is dedicated to the good life *defined as the American people define it*. In other words, a part of the responsibility of the public school is to give

respect to the values of the people. Literary humanists, religious leaders, and political conservatives protest that this is a mean and vulgar educational ideal. It is mean and vulgar from the perspective of those who find the masses of men motivated primarily by meanness and vulgarity. Another point of view would see in the human quest for food, clothing, shelter, family life, health, companionship, and adventure, the ground for nobility.

Certainly, in a world in which elements of meanness and vulgarity remain, to ground education in what the people want constitutes an incomplete educational ideal. Nevertheless, here is the starting point. Unswerving respect for the values of the people as held and expressed in specific times and places must characterize education in a free society. The real work of the school is, however, in the art of exercising disciplined intelligence upon the subject matters of the particular culture. Two types of consideration become fundamental in the formulation of educational policy. The first is concerned with the desires, aspirations, aversions, and the prohibitions of the community. The second has to do with thoroughgoing critical examination of these. Educational policy must be guided by respect for the first, and development and extension of the second. When educational policy is formulated in the light of these criteria, it is constantly challenged on two major fronts. The aristocracy of the society—scholars, religious leaders, politicians and political theorists, business leaders—desire to censor the values of the people as held and expressed. They wish the schools to start not with the concerns of the people but with the concerns of a select group. In this controversy, teachers and leaders in the schools stand on the side of the masses of men. However, as teachers and educational leaders insist upon full and unqualified criticism of the concerns of the people, resistance may develop not only within the aristocracy but also among the general public. The democratic faith is that demonstrable fruits of exercise of free inquiry and criticism

in the society will cause common people to support the cause of free inquiry and criticism, even as traditional values are reconstructed through such exercise. Winning such support, however, requires effort. Perpetuation of the free, public, secular school that makes critical intelligence an educational ideal demands constant vigilance.

The contemporary critique of the schools by humanistic scholars apparently involves a rejection of the notion that it is the responsibility of educators to respect the values of the people. Moreover, there is dispute as to what constitutes the disciplines of critical intelligence, and there is some disposition to argue that criticism must be supplemented by revelation and intuition. However, to the extent that humanistic scholars, scientists, and social scientists could accept criteria for educational policy-making which have been suggested here, academic scholars could make much-needed contributions to the formulation of public school policy.\*

### PLANNING BY SCHOLARS ENCOURAGED

That the work of public education should start with and persist in giving high respect to the earthy values held by the people living in those communities served by the schools has a moral, psychological, and pedagogical basis. The moral consideration is that one man's values are as important, as worthy of hearing, as those of any other man. The psychological consideration is that the personalities of men are formed by the societies which nurture them, and thus, that persons are understood only as their cultures are understood. The pedagogical consideration is that teachers can only work effectively to foster the development of critical intelligence as they understand their students.

The basis for recommending that the schools should concentrate upon development and extension of the arts of disciplined critical intelligence has been laid in the arguments of several



preceding chapters in this book. There is so much to be known about cultures, and the specialized dimensions of critical scholarship are so various, that the divorcement between the public schools and academic scholars in higher education and research is, indeed, to be deplored. Nevertheless, efforts at collaboration are likely to be ineffective if there cannot be agreement upon fundamental criteria for educational policy. The following are some of the conditions that must be met if partisans in the public school controversy are to move toward responsible creative criticism and inquiry:

1) The appropriateness of a central emphasis upon development of critical intelligence as the major aim of the schools must be granted. Those who would make of the public school an instrument for imparting standards of judgment and taste handed down by tradition, or who would make of the public school an institution for the formation of passive followers must remain outside. Upon these issues there can be no compromise.

2) Elemental human values such as those of food, clothing, shelter, security—the “earthy values”—must be given high respect. Those who would insist that these satisfactions are unimportant have separated themselves from the masses of men who make up the public. Some of those who criticize contemporary America for its materialism apparently despise the persisting concern about the elemental earthy satisfactions. There are those, for instance, who apparently maintain that malnourished, poverty-stricken, irregularly employed people who have achieved the moral and spiritual insights of the Greek-Hebrew-Christian tradition are most blessed. Some of the criticisms of so-called “vocationalism” in the schools appear to express the view that the earthy values are of low priority. If we cannot agree upon the prior claim of the earthy values, it is unlikely that agreement regarding educational policy can issue.

3) Responsible proposals can be directed only to specific situations, in the light of possibilities, limitations, unique character-

istics of the people, materials, and things which are there. Thus, any man who wishes to speak about the schools must give of his time and effort to become aware of the neighborhood, the materials, and the people for whom he deems his proposals adequate.

More directly, academic scholars who wish to speak responsibly must study school programs now in existence and school neighborhoods which furnish the media upon which creative critical intelligence works. Their statements are irresponsible until they do this. Moreover, educationists must more carefully avoid generalizations not clearly grounded in study of culture. What do we know about the neighborhood, the people, the present work of the school, and the backgrounds of the students? All who wish to speak of the schools must remorselessly plague themselves with these questions.

4) If the need for community study as the basis of educational proposals be granted, it becomes important that resources of scholarship be fully drawn upon in determining the school curriculum.\* The schools are desperately in need of all the competent scholarship they can get. Scholars who know their fields but who also have studied the lives of the people can make the best judgments about which knowledge is of most worth, where it is valuable, and when.

### Summary

The purpose of the concluding section of this study (Chapters XII, XIII, XIV, XV, and XVI) has been to outline in some detail a conception of disciplined critical intelligence as an educational ideal in the light of which educational policy in a free society may be guided. These chapters, then, may be understood as constituting a critique as well as a set of proposals. Certain aspects of the positions taken in this section of the study deserve special emphasis in this concluding summary:

*The public schools belong to the people, not to the teachers nor to the college professors. Public schools are institutions close to the people. They exist in the communities near the homes of the people.*

School administrators and teachers are also parents and citizens, partaking in their lives as much of the culture of the community as of their special academic and professional groups. While professional educators properly exercise leadership in continuing discussion of educational policy, determination of policy is in the hands of all the people. Any professional analysis of educational theory not grounded in study of culture is irrelevant. Philosophy of education cannot be separated from educational ideals alive in the culture.

*Although a philosophy of education is based upon a world-view, a philosophy of education is not the same as a philosophy of life.* At various points in the preceding pages, a distinction between the private and the public domains has been indicated. This is a book about public education in the United States, the arguments about it, and the presuppositions behind the arguments. The position that has been supported as an appropriate and responsible philosophy for American public education is that which emphasizes the development of critical intelligence as the primary task of the schools. This position, seen in cultural context, is in the heritage of Darwin and Dewey. Now it would seem unlikely that one who rejects completely the Darwinian and pragmatic tradition in his privately held world view could, nevertheless, adopt the ideal of critical intelligence as a theoretical basis for his professional work as a teacher. However, a teacher's privately held world view is his own business; teachers are always to be judged on the basis of their competence as teachers, and the effectiveness of their educational leadership.

The point is that some distinction can be drawn between the search for a philosophy of education, particularly one appropriate to American public education, and the search for a personal philosophy in terms of which one lives his life. The personal or private philosophy may be more inclusive than the professional or public philosophy. Personal integrity and inner peace, however, would appear to be impossible unless, somehow, one's professional philosophy can be satisfactorily reconciled in some way with his personal world-model (i.e., his private philosophy of life).

*The school is but one of a number of important social institutions.* The position developed here is one which rejects unequivocally the conception that formal education is all of life, and that the school is responsible for the whole child. However, it accepts the view that educational policy is influenced by critically formulated notions

about man's world and his place in it. Moreover, it not only accepts but also deliberately forwards the conception that the whole child—including his culture—is involved when a child learns.

What this amounts to is taking the position that formal education is a specialized social function which must take the whole into account to get its bearings, but which does not constitute the whole. The kitchen is an important part of a house, and a kitchen must be planned with full knowledge of the over-all plan of the house. But this is not the same as saying that the kitchen is *all* of the house.

The notion that the school serves a specialized function in the light of a more comprehensive total situation has a number of specific implications:

1) The position that the schools should develop critical intelligence presumes that life outside the school—the life of home, street, playground, church, etc.—will provide experiences to be critical about, and will informally produce beliefs that need to be criticized. The school itself will also provide such experiences and beliefs, for school is also a part of life. Primarily, however, the school provides a method for dealing with experience; it makes no claim to be the source of all experience.

2) To emphasize critical intelligence as a primary educational value is not to minimize the importance of love, compassion, and faith. It is, however, to take the position that people need to be critical about their loves and faiths, and it is to say that school should provide them with tools for the purpose.

3) Again, to argue against tradition as an educational authority is not to destroy tradition. It is, to the contrary, presumed that our society will continue to develop traditions of such depth and meaning that they deserve to be examined critically and tested for present relevance.

## Notes

p. 295 "*The community . . . furnishes the media and the subject matter of thought.*"

Can something be taught which has no perch in the life experience of those who are to learn it? How can the words have meaning if no experiences representing the words have

been had? Thus, we argue here that the experiential media for education must be present in the culture; for there is no learning except as there is a movement from present meanings toward reformulation of them in the light of new interpretations. There must be something to start with.

- p. 301 "... school is 'crazy' ..."

Words are tools of thought, but it is possible to become so fascinated by the game of sorting and ordering the tools that their excuse for being is forgotten. Word juggling can be as fascinating a game as chess or bridge. Higher education may even encourage a certain kind of shallow pseudo-scholarship which is no more than word juggling. See Jacques Barzun's discussion of the dangers of "hokum" in education. (*Teacher in America*.) See also Stuart Chase, *The Tyranny of Words* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938) and Wendell Johnson, *People in Quandaries* (New York: Harper, 1946).

- p. 307 "... academic scholars could make much-needed contributions to the formulation of public school policy."

There are numerous indications of a resurgent interest of academic scholars in the work of the schools. The American Historical Association has set up a History Service Center to make available to public school teachers advice and wisdom of professional historians. The Modern Language Association has concerned itself with the teaching of languages in the schools. Such enterprises are encouraged by the American Council of Learned Societies. The possible weakness of these ventures may be, of course, that they do not come out of intimate involvement in the work of schools. The advice of scholars is needed, but that advice will be more effective if some of it is given while scholars are actually working shoulder to shoulder with teachers. It may well be questioned whether many academic scholars really know the work of the schools. Notable exceptions have been Charles C. Fries of the Department of English at the University of Michigan, Baker Brownell of the Northwestern University Department of Philosophy, and James Bryant Conant.

p. 309 ". . . it becomes important that resources of scholarship be fully drawn upon . . ."

The 1958 meeting of the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards was a joint convention of public school teachers, professional educationists, and various representatives of learned societies in America. The conference, held at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, was conceived by the professional educationists, who tendered the invitations to the Learned Societies. The *Journal of Teacher Education* reports the thinking of both educationists and academic scholars. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education concerns itself with the establishment and enforcement of standards in the preparation of teachers. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the National Society of College Teachers of Education are organizations concerned with fundamental policy in teacher education. For a history of teacher education in the United States, see Walter S. Monroe, *Teaching-Learning Theory and Teacher Education, 1890-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952).

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